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TESTAMENTS,
With Practical OBSERVATIONS.

Written Originally in *French*,
By the Reverend Mr *OSTERVÄLD*,
Professor of Divinity, and one of the Ministers of
the Church at *Neuchâtel* in *Switzerland*: And by
him presented to the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

Translated by
JOHN CHAMBERLAYNE, Esq;
In THREE VOLUMES.

V O L. I.

The FOURTH EDITION,
Revised, Corrected, and very much Enlarged from the
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MDCCLXIV.

T O H E R
R O Y A L H I G H N E S S
T H E
P R I N C E S S
O F
W A L E S:

M A D A M,

TH E following *Arguments and
Observations upon the Old Testa-
ment*, originally composed in *French* by
an eminent Divine of *Neufchatel*, and
now

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now translated into *English*, by one of our own Members, we humbly beg leave to lay before your Royal Highness.

B O O K S of this nature are never out of season: As they are wrote upon the sacred Oracles, so they derive a certain lustre from their original, and thereby recommend themselves, at least to those, to whom the divine Word is sweeter than honey, and dearer than thousands of gold and silver. This was the taste the Royal Prophet had of those saving testimonies in his time, when he wisely chose them to be his *delight*, and his *counsellors*.

As

D E D I C A T I O N. vii

As your Royal Highness has given early and convincing proofs of your love to the same Word, and of your zeal to be guided thereby, through the temptations of an evil world; so we are persuaded, that a treatise, tending to the spiritual improvement of the mind, by explaining that Word of truth, will meet with a favourable reception from your Royal hands; and your illustrious name prefixed to it, gain the more upon those who stand in need of such assistances.

THIS consideration emboldens us to inscribe these sheets to your Royal Highness, not so much to furnish you with new matter of knowledge, where-
with

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with your princely mind is already so richly adorned, as to lay before you an instance of the endeavours that are used to promote unfeigned Religion; to which the holy writings must needs be most conducive; especially, if the Reader consult them with an intent; not only to inform his judgment, but to stir up his will to a fervent desire, that he may digest in his heart, and express in his life, the important truths therein contained.

ANOTHER very engaging motive to this address, is the profound respect we bear to your illustrious person, of whose protection and countenance we shall be always highly ambitious, in carrying on a work, which, we hope,
may

D E D I C A T I O N. ix

may not be thought unworthy the Patronage of so great and pious a Princess.

MAY GOD Almighty, the great rewarder of all goodness, who hath raised your Royal Highness to so eminent a dignity, crown your steadfast adherence to the Protestant cause with fresh supplies of his grace, and make you a successful instrument of promoting such an unity, as may effectually strengthen the interest of true Religion.

MAY the same good GOD guide you by his Spirit, guard you by his power, comfort you by his presence, and after having long, very long con-

[a]

tinued

x D E D I C A T I O N.

tinued you a most shining pattern of holiness here, translate you to that kingdom which cannot be moved. These are the most ardent Prayers of,

M A D A M,

Your Royal Highness's

Most-Obedient, and

Most Devoted

Humble Servants,

THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T,

Prefixed to the last Edition of the BIBLE,
published with the Reverend Mr *Ostervald's*
ARGUMENTS and REFLECTIONS, at
Neufchatel, in the year 1744 *.

WHEN the Liturgy, composed for the use
of the churches at *Neufchatel*, was published,
about thirty years ago, it was observed in the Preface, that one principal design of

* It was thought expedient to place this *Advertisement* at the head of the following Translation, not that it suits, in every respect, the *English* Edition, but because the author thought fit to introduce his *Preliminary Discourse* with it; and chiefly, because it presents the reader with a brief account of the several improvements made in this work, from its first appearance in the world, in the year 1716, to the last edition at *Neufchatel*, in 1744. In which last, there are Arguments and Reflections added to a great number of chapters which had none before, besides additions and alterations made in almost all the rest: so that the following Translation, which contains all the additions and improvements of the last *French* edition, may be now looked upon as the most useful companion for the Scriptures, and the best human means that perhaps was ever invented, to make those divine books produce in us the salutary effects for which they were graciously designed, the pious reader of the scriptures being furnished with suitable Reflections upon almost every chapter in the Bible. The chapters that are still without Reflections, are in number very inconsiderable; since in the whole Old and New Testament, there are but twenty-eight; *viz.* The *Song of Solomon*, containing eight chapters, the nine last chapters of *Ezekiel*, and eleven in the *Revelation* of St *John*.

that Liturgy, was to make the reading of the holy scriptures a regular part of the public worship; and that, to render the reading of them more useful, it was thought expedient to add to the chapters, which were appointed to be read in public, Arguments, pointing out the contents of each chapter, and Reflections, shewing the use and improvement to be made of it. We shall not here trouble the reader with the reasons which induced us to make use of this method: it shall only be observed, that when these Arguments and Reflections were first composed, as they were designed only for the particular use of the churches of Neufchatel, the author had no thought, of making them public: But when several copies of them were dispersed, and the illustrious Society at London for promoting Christian Knowledge, had procured an English Translation, which was printed in the year 1716, there seemed to be a kind of necessity for publishing the work in French; which was done in the year 1720.

Some time after, a resolution was taken in Holland, to print the Bible, with the Arguments and Reflections added to each chapter, that when the sacred writings were read, the Arguments and Reflections might more conveniently be read with them. This design was communicated to the Reverend Mr Ostervald, Minister of the church of Neufchatel, and author of these Arguments and Reflections, who was desired to put in their natural order the chapters in Kings and Chronicles, where the same circumstances are related, and which, in the edition published at Neufchatel, had been blended together, as the connection of the history

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history seemed to require; that by this means each chapter might have its proper Arguments and Reflections. This the author consented to, and put that part of his work into a new form; which produced afterwards the beautiful edition of the Bible which was printed at Amsterdam in 1724.

The copies of that Bible growing scarce, it has since been thought expedient to reprint it at Neufchatel. The intention was no sooner communicated to the Reverend Mr Osterwald, but he set himself to revise the whole work, made several improvements, and corrected the errors which had crept into the edition printed in Holland. The version received in our churches he still retained, making only such corrections as seemed necessary, and altering those expressions and phrases, which, being grown out of use, might occasion some obscurity. He added likewise, in several places, Notes and Explanations on the text, together with new Arguments and Reflections on a great number of chapters which had none before, because not read in the public service: such are the chapters which contain nothing but names and genealogies. However, there are still some few chapters without Reflections, because they are acknowledged by all to be attended with difficulties, which make it hard to say any thing clear and express concerning them. Our author has herein followed the example of many eminent Divines, who have chose to be silent, where the meaning of the text was not intirely clear and evident. In a work of this nature, which is intended for general use, nothing should be advanced but what is certain and incontestable; and great care should be taken not to enter

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into a discussion of such points, as would tend rather to puzzle than instruct the reader.

If any should be surprised to find some of the chapters divided into two Lessons, they are desired to consider, that when the chapters were very long, and full of variety, this could not well be avoided, without danger of protracting the service too much, and overburdening peoples memories with the variety and length of the Reflections.

But as it would be useless to furnish Christians with assistances in reading the holy scriptures to advantage, if they neglect to read them, or if they do it without suitable dispositions; it was judged necessary to give some instructions on this subject in a Preliminary Discourse.



THE

PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE,

*Giving some Directions concerning the Reading
of the Holy Scriptures.*

THAT great numbers neglect the reading of the Holy Scriptures, is as evident as it is deplorable. Christians there are, innumerable, who are almost entirely ignorant of the Bible; because those that have the rule over them suffer it to be read only by particular persons, and with the greatest precaution, as if it were a dangerous thing to put the word of God indifferently into the hands of all men. But, not to concern ourselves at present with these considerations, we shall only observe, that the greatest part, even of those who have the reading of the sacred writings recommended to them, neglect to do it. Many, it is true, for want of learning, may not be in a capacity to read the scriptures; which is a great misfortune, and a shame to Christians, that the number of those who cannot read should be still so great among them. It may be said too, that a great many do not read the word of God because they are unable, through their poverty, to purchase that divine book. Those to whom God has given riches, should supply this defect,

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fect, by dedicating some portion to the pious use of providing Bibles for the poor. To this may be added; that a great number of domestick, and other servants, have not leisure to discharge this necessary duty; because their masters allow them not time for it. But however this be, those Christians are utterly inexcusable, who have it in their power to read the word of God, and will not do it.

God, in his infinite wisdom, and unbounded goodness, has supplied men, by the revelation of his will, with the most perfect means of instruction. He inspired the prophets and apostles, and was pleased their writings should be preserved, that in them truth might always remain pure, without being corrupted by the forgetfulness and inconstancy, the carelessness or malice of men. The scriptures, therefore, are the most valuable blessing God ever bestowed upon us, except the sending his Son into the world; they are a treasure, which contain in them every thing that can make us truly rich, and truly happy. We must, therefore, have very little regard for God and his gifts, if we neglect to make a right use of this; and it would argue the greatest degree of presumption, to imagine we can do without that assistance, which God himself has judged so needful and expedient for us.

The use of the holy scriptures was very common among the primitive Christians; and as they were regularly read in their religious assemblies, so did they read them with great diligence in their families. But the scriptures were afterwards neglected, in proportion as ignorance and superstition gained ground.

The

The people were no longer instructed in them; and though the custom was retained of reading some portion of them in the church, they were rendered entirely useless, by being read in a language the people were unacquainted with. At length, the private use of God's word was wholly laid aside; and this divine Light in a manner extinguished for several ages. About two hundred years ago, it was, as it were, taken from under the bushel, where it had lain so long concealed; and the people in several parts of Christendom, recovered their right of reading the scriptures; but most of those who enjoy this privilege do not improve it, as they ought.

This indifference and neglect in reading the sacred writings, is the true cause of that ignorance which prevails among the generality of Christians. This is the reason they have but a slight and superficial knowledge of the doctrine and duties of Christianity, and too many entertain notions that are entirely false and groundless. This is the source of the many errors which are in vogue among us, and of the many impious and libertine notions which prevail more and more; for as soon as we forsake the scriptures, which are our only rule of faith, to follow our own reasonings, we must of necessity go astray. It is forsaking this divine light, which has occasioned many persons, who have thought themselves inspired, and imagined they had attained to the highest degree of piety and perfection, to fall into the most extravagant notions, and sometimes into the greatest impurities. In short, to the same cause may be ascribed all that remissness, that carnal and worldly-mindedness, which is too common among Christians. All this, I say, proceeds

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proceeds from not reading the holy scriptures, and not making that use of them for which they were given.

It is true, this neglect in Christians may be in some measure supplied by reading the word of God in our religious assemblies. And indeed, if it is surprising the people should neglect to read it, there is still more reason to be astonished, that for so many years, men should have forgot to give the reading of the sacred writings that honourable place in the public worship, which it always enjoyed among the Jews and among the first Christians. But even supposing the scriptures were regularly read in the church, this alone would not be sufficient, unless Christians read them likewise in their own houses. The express declarations of God's word, the practice of the church, both under the Old and New Testament, and many other reasons, which it is not expedient to mention at present, prove the necessity of doing this. Besides, private reading is attended with some advantages which public reading is not. In private, one may read with more leisure, consider things more closely, repeat the thing more than once, and make a more nice application. Private reading is, likewise, the best way to improve by what we hear in public; it being impossible rightly to comprehend what is said in public discourses and sermons, without being well versed in the scriptures. Add to this, that private reading keeps up a spirit of piety and devotion whereas those who neglect this, inevitably fall into an indifference and disrelish for divine things, which must be attended with remissness in the duties of Religion, and in a slavish subjection to the passions.

We proceed now to consider the manner in which the holy scriptures ought to be read: Here, we shall make some reflections; first, on the books of the holy scriptures, and their several parts; and, secondly, on the dispositions which ought to accompany the reading of them.

I. Every one knows, that the scriptures comprehend the Old and New Testaments: And as the Old Testament, which was written before the coming of Jesus Christ, is a part of the Bible which is least read, and very many never read it at all, it seems necessary here to prove the usefulness of those books in particular. It is a very great mistake to imagine they were designed only for the Jews, and that they are of no use to Christians. *St Paul says, that whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; and, speaking of what had happened to the Israelites, he says, that all these things happened to them for ensamples, and were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.* Jesus Christ himself exhorts his disciples to *search the scriptures, for in them, says he, ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.* Our Lord, when he thus speaks, recommends the reading and meditating on the writings of *Moses* and the prophets, as he does in several other places. On the knowledge of what is contained in those writings, depends the right understanding of the principal articles of the Christian religion. Of this we have a very remarkable and convincing proof, in the frequent quotations made by Christ and his apostles

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apostles out of the histories, prophecies, and other passages of the Old Testament. There are even whole books in the New Testament, which no one can rightly understand, who has not read the Old with some care and attention; this remark is particularly true of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, which is nothing but a comparison between the law and the gospel.

But to convince us more fully of the usefulness of the books of the Old Testament, let us examine a little into their contents; they are of three kinds, being either historical, doctrinal phetical.

The historical books, which are the first in order, begin at *Genesis* and end at the book of *Ester*. They are called historical, because they contain nothing but histories, except some part of the books of *Moses*, where the laws which God gave to the Jews are set down. In these books, we are informed of the most considerable events relating to religion, and the people of God, from the creation of the world, to the return from the *Babylonish* captivity. These are the books we should begin with; for it is remarkable, that the first instruction God was pleased to give his church, was by history; this method of instruction being the most plain and easy, and suited to every capacity. Histories are so easy to comprehend and retain, that even children may understand them without much difficulty; and therefore, the foundation of their instruction should be laid here. Besides, on historical facts the whole of religion is founded; as history furnishes us with invincible proofs of the truth and divine authority of the scriptures.

tures. However, the histories of the Old Testament contain not only facts, but likewise the doctrines and duties of religion: They set before us many noble examples, wherein are displayed the wisdom, goodness, and justice of God's providence, his love to good men, and displeasure against sinners. The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, is a remarkable proof of the truth of this observation. In that chapter, St *Paul*, designing to shew the nature and effects of faith, collects together in one view the examples of faith, obedience, and constancy, which we meet with in the lives of the patriarchs, and other illustrious persons, who lived before the coming of *Christ*; which may convince us, that the reading and meditating on the histories of the Old Testament, must be of great use to Christians.

The books of the Old Testament, which are called doctrinal and moral, are the book of *Job*, the *Psalms*, and the writings of *Solomon*.

These books are not altogether so clear as those which are historical. In *Job* and the *Proverbs*, for instance, we meet with some passages whose sense is not easily determined; which is generally owing to some defect in the version; the extreme conciseness of the sentences, and the figures of speech, so different from any in use among us, making it very hard to express them in the modern languages. But if these books are attended with a little obscurity in some places, they may, nevertheless, be read with great advantage.

They supply us, in general, with these three things; with doctrines; with precepts of morality, and with sentiments

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sentiments of piety and devotion. First, We learn from them the principal doctrines of Religion, such as these; That there is a God who made the world; that he governs all things by his providence, dispensing good and evil, protecting good men, and punishing the wicked; that this God, who is perfectly just and righteous, will reward every man according to his works; with other doctrines of the like nature, which are clearly displayed in these books, and confirmed with several very useful and instructive examples, particularly in the book of *Job*, and the *Psalms*. Secondly, These books contain most excellent rules of morality, and precepts of great use relating to the principal duties of religion; to justice, charity, purity, temperance, patience, and other virtues. Thirdly, In this part of the Old Testament, and particularly in the *Psalms*, we meet with exalted sentiments of piety, and the most excellent patterns of devotion; here we are taught how we ought to be affected with the majesty of God, and reverence and adore the supreme Being; with what pleasure and delight we ought to meditate upon the wonderful works of creation and providence; with what gratitude and fervency of devotion, we ought to extol his perfections, and praise him for all his mercies; that we ought to pay the highest regard to God's holy commandments, and account those advantages inestimable, which piety procures to its true votaries. Here we learn to trust in God, to call upon him in time of trouble, to submit with resignation to the divine will, and to have recourse to God's mercy, by repentance, when we have offended him. Therefore,

fore, the reading of these books must needs be of great use to guide and inflame our devotion.

The prophetic books are the writings of the prophets, from *Isaiah* to *Malachi*. They are stiled prophetic, because they principally contain prophecies, or predictions. They are not, however, so strictly prophetic, but we find in them several remarkable histories, as in *Jeremiah*, *Daniel*, and *Jonah*; as well as many useful, moral instructions, in the exhortations and remonstrances of the prophets. The prophecies, which make up the most considerable part of these books, are of three kinds; some relate to Jesus Christ, and the Christian church; others, concern the Jews more particularly; and others foretel what was to befall the several nations and empires of the world.

If, in reading the predictions of the prophets, we meet at first with some obscurity, instead of being surpris'd at it, let us consider, that every prophecy must be obscure, at least, in some respects, before the event. It was so far from being necessary to the salvation of the faithful in those times, that these predictions should be absolutely clear to them, and that they should perfectly comprehend them in every part, that, on the contrary, the meaning of them must needs be concealed. The unsearchable wisdom of God, and the wonders of his providence, appear with much greater lustre, when we reflect, that his designs were accomplished, and the predictions of the prophets fulfilled, without men knowing any thing of it, and by such means as no one would ever have thought of. Besides, had these predictions

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tions been absolutely clear in every circumstance, men might have so far obstructed the designs of providence, that continual miracles, and altering the course of nature, might have been necessary in order to bring about the execution of them. Therefore God, in great wisdom, spread a vail over the prophecies, that they might be attended with some obscurity.

It is, however, to be observed, that what was once obscure, the event has made clear. Most of the prophecies relating to the coming of Christ, to his sufferings, and kingdom, to the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the *Gentiles*, are now very easy to comprehend. The predictions concerning the Jews, which foretold the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and their dispersion, occasioned first by the *Affyrians* and *Babylonians*, and afterwards by the *Romans*, soon after the coming of our Lord; these predictions are so perfectly explained by the event, that there is no difficulty attending them. As to those prophecies which related to other nations and kingdoms of the world, as the prophecies of *Isaiab*, from the thirteenth chapter, and the remarkable predictions of *Daniel*, if the generality of readers find them difficult, because they are ignorant of the history of those times and nations, they are quite clear to those who are acquainted with that history. Besides this obscurity, arising from the subject of the prophecies, the stile of these inspired writers, who make use of various images, and figures of speech, foreign to the usages of these times, is another cause of obscurity. But with some assistance, like that which is attempted in this work, and a little acquaintance

IN THE ARGUMENTS, &c. FOR

acquaintance with the language of the prophets, we may easily discover their meaning. Upon the whole, if there are some passages in their writings which we do not perfectly comprehend, we may, without prejudice to our salvation, be ignorant of their true import.

It is a very great fault to neglect, as too many do, the reading of the prophecies. If Christians would but read them, and meditate on them, they would find an astonishing light dart from them; they would discover beauties which they are now strangers to; and would have a more lively sense of the truth and excellence of religion than they now have. In fact, nothing can be conceived a more convincing proof of the being of God, nothing a more undeniable argument that he governs all things, and that the scriptures are his word, than to see the exact completion of those ancient prophecies, which were in the hands of the Jews, such as we now have them, many ages before the coming of our Lord. For this reason, *St Peter* advises Christians to read and meditate on the prophecies, as a most likely means to strengthen them in the faith. *We have also*, says he, *a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.*

The New Testament is that part of the scriptures which it most concerns us to be acquainted with. If the Old and New Testament be compared together, the latter is certainly the clearest and most perfect: For though the doctrine of the gospel be at the bottom the same with that of *Moses* and the prophets,

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yet it is certain, that the divine truths, the duties, the promises and threatnings of the Gospel, are proposed with greater strength and evidence than those of the Old Testament. The Gospel has not only removed the shadows of the law, and set in a clear light what was before revealed only in part; but, likewise, teaches us many things, which the faithful of old knew not, and which the prophets themselves, as our Saviour observes, were ignorant of. Hence it is, that St Paul calls those things *mysteries*, or *secret things*, which were unknown to former ages. Nor is it to be wondred at, that we find greater light in the Gospel than in the Law: *Moses* and the prophets speak in the Old Testament; but in the New it is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, of whom it is said, *This is my beloved Son, hear him*. St Paul makes this distinction, when he says, *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, has, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son*.

The New Testament consists of the *Gospels*, the *Acts of the Apostles*, and the *Epistles*. Of these, the Gospels are the first in order and dignity; which offer to our view, First, the discourses of our Lord, as they proceeded from his sacred lips; the most holy and most perfect laws, which he taught mankind, that thereby they might learn to know God, and to serve him in spirit and in truth; the duties which he recommends to the practice of his disciples; the rewards and punishments of another life; and all these attended with such a degree of evidence and conviction, as is to be met with nowhere else. Secondly,

condly, We read in the Gospels an account of our Saviour's miracles, which display his divine power, and at the same time his great goodness, since all his miracles were acts of mercy and kindness. When we read the Gospels, we ought to give great attention to our Lord's miracles, as this method God was pleased to make choice of, to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. Lastly, In them we see described the unspotted life of our great Redeemer, his zeal, his obedience to the will of his Father, his amazing love to mankind, his meekness, humility, sincerity, purity, patience, and renouncing of the world. These virtues, which shine forth in his life, are all united in his death, and appear with the greatest lustre. To the history of the death of Jesus Christ, the gospel adds likewise an account of his resurrection and ascension, which are the foundation of our *faith* and *hope*.

From hence it is evident, that the Gospels are the most considerable part of the New Testament; for which reason, the reading of them has always been looked upon in the church as a thing of the greatest importance; and as the Jews, though they read the writings of the prophets, and received them as divine, had a particular veneration for the law of Moses, and gave that the first rank; so Christians have always expressed an extraordinary respect for the gospels. From hence proceeded the ancient custom of rising up, and standing at the time the Gospels were reading in the church, and the custom of reading and explaining some part of them every Sunday in the year.

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The *Acts of the Apostles* inform us, in what manner the gospel, after our Lord's ascension, was preached, both at *Jerusalem*, and the places adjacent, and in several parts of the world. The reading this book is of great use, and as it is wholly historical, it cannot be very difficult to understand.

The *Epistles*, or, letters, which the apostles sent, either to the churches in their time, or to particular persons, make likewise a part of the canonical books of the New Testament. St *Peter* informs us, that St *Paul's* Epistles were reckoned among the divine writings, in the life-time of the apostles. It would be a gross mistake, to imagine, that the Gospels alone are sufficient, and that the Epistles may be dispensed with. The Epistles furnish us with an explanation of several articles, which are not altogether so evident from the Gospels; so that the Gospels are more clear, in many respects, when the Epistles are added to them. In truth, Christ did not always think fit to explain himself fully and completely upon every subject; his thoughts were often concealed under figurative expressions, or similitudes, which were somewhat obscure, and were not to be entirely cleared up till after his ascension: There are even many things, which Christ did not tell his apostles while he was with them, and which, consequently, are not to be found in the Gospels. Hear our Lord's own words: *I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now; Nevertheless, when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, and will shew you things to come.* The apostles

apostles, after they had received the Holy Ghost, were much more enlightened than before; and therefore we meet, in their writings, with the discovery of many things of the greatest importance, and even such as are absolutely necessary for our instruction.

For the right understanding of the Epistles, the chief thing to be observed, is the occasion and design of writing them. Though they treat of different subjects, as the exigencies of the church, required at that time; yet what the apostles deliver upon those subjects, serves to clear up several points in religion. Their aim, in general, was to preserve in the Christian churches, then lately founded by them, sound doctrine, and purity of manners; and to guard the faithful against the errors which many persons, converted to Christianity from among the Jews and Gentiles, took great pains to disseminate, and thereby corrupted the doctrines and practices of Christianity. The grand design of the apostles in all their Epistles, is to persuade Christians to persevere in the faith, and in a holy life; and therefore they all end with earnest exhortations to the practice of the virtues and duties of religion; There are even some which were written with no other view, particularly the Epistles called Catholick, which, except a few places, wherein the apostles slightly touch upon some article of faith, consist wholly of moral precepts, and exhortations to true holiness.

If, From what has been said, it appears, that the reading of the Old and New Testament is a most excellent means of instruction and edification: But before we

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can reap this advantage from it, the heart and mind must be fitly disposed for the reading of them. The scriptures may be read, and with great diligence, and yet no advantage ensue, if we read them in a slight, cursory way, and only for the sake of reading. It is with reading, as it is with prayer, and other acts of religion; they are of no use, and even become sinful, when not attended with the necessary dispositions.

1. The first necessary disposition is *Attention*; that is, when a man reads, his mind should be free, composed, and disengaged from other thoughts. Above all, we must take heed that our hearts be not disordered by our passions; for the heart and the passions are the great causes of distraction and inattention in reading, as well as in prayer; the mind naturally dwelling upon those things which have taken possession of the heart. For this reason, it is convenient to make choice of those seasons for reading, in which we are disengaged from other things, and particularly the morning. It is likewise of great use, before we begin to read, to stir up our attention, by seriously considering what we are going about, and reflecting, that when we read the scriptures God speaks to us, and by his word desires to make us happy, and bring us to everlasting life. To secure attention, we must likewise read with deliberation. Many are very fond of reading a great deal, and running over the scriptures in a short time; forgetting that what makes reading profitable is attention, meditation, and serious reflection on what we read. Reading, which is the nourishment of the soul,

soul, is like food to the body, which cannot support life and vigour, unless it be chewed and digested. Let us therefore avoid precipitation, do nothing in a hurry, and allow ourselves leisure to weigh and consider well what we read: To this end, we must avoid reading too long at a time; for short readings are generally best: however, the following distinction may be observed. When we read the Historical Books, we may read more at a time, and faster; because history is more connected, its transitions from one subject to another are not so quick, and its connection engages and keeps up the attention, and makes it easier to retain what has been read. But when chapters are read which contain doctrines or precepts, as in the book of *Job*, in the Proverbs, and Epistles, one cannot read so long together; because each verse demands a particular consideration, and therefore, we must read the less, and with the greater deliberation.

2. We must read *frequently* and *diligently*. No one can be sufficiently acquainted with the scriptures, without making them familiar by frequent reading. Regular and frequent reading gives us an opportunity of meditating on them the more; whereas those who read but seldom, will never furnish their minds, much less fill their hearts, with what is contained in those sacred books. Besides, a careful and constant reading will give us a greater relish for God's word; which, the more we read and meditate on, the more beauties we discover in it; the more it enlightens the understanding, and sanctifies and rejoices the heart. A Christian, therefore, should make this divine word

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his regular study; should meditate therein day and night; and as he every day takes food for the nourishment of his body, so should he every day give his soul that heavenly food which will nourish him to eternal life.

3. We must read with *judgment* and *discretion*; if we would rightly understand the sense of scripture, and discern the use we are to make of it. If this disposition be wanting, we may read without advantage, and even by reading run into dangerous errors.

This *judgment* and *discretion* is necessary, First, In order to distinguish how far what we read is the word of God. For as there are many actions related in scripture, not for our imitation, but rather to inspire us with horror and detestation against them, so there are many things which were not committed to writing to be the rule either of our thoughts or actions. The sacred writers sometimes set down the speeches and sentiments of the wicked: For instance, in the prophet *Malachi* we read these words, *It is in vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?* And in one of *St Paul's* epistles, we meet with this maxim of carnal and profane men, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die:* But when we read these, and such like passages, we must remember, that those who speak thus are wicked men. And even those who are in scripture commended for their piety, did not always act in strict conformity to it: Thus, when *David* vowed utterly to destroy *Nabal's* house, we must conclude he sinned in so doing, and the discourses of *Job's* friends, tho' they are extremely beautiful and instructive, are not

to be approved of in every respect; for it is said, *God was wrath with them, because they had not spoken the thing that was right.*

This discernment is likewise necessary, in order to judge in what sense we are to interpret what we read; otherwise we may often be greatly mistaken. For example, when *Moses* says, *The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart*, one might imagine the hardness of mens hearts proceeds from God, and that he is the author of it; which would be a notion shocking and blasphemous to the highest degree. When *St Paul* says, *That Jesus Christ has delivered us from the law; that he has blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us; and that we are justified without the deeds of the law*; we must consider in what sense he says it; or else we may run into a most pernicious error, and imagine Christians are dispensed with keeping the moral law, and that good works are not necessary. Every day we hear sinners and libertines pervert texts of scripture, to excuse themselves and extenuate their crimes. *Unlearned and unstable men*, as *St Peter* observed in his time, *wrest that divine book to their own destruction.* Examples of this kind are innumerable; which proves, that it is of the greatest importance to read the scriptures with prudence and discretion.

One of the best ways to prevent mistaking the true sense of scripture, is to have a constant eye to the design which the sacred writers had in view; to examine upon what occasion, and to what end they speak; to observe the connection of what is said with what precedes and what follows; and to compare what we read with other passages which may serve

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serve to explain it. If any one should take all the verses of the scriptures apart, as so many unconnected sentences, with each its proper sense and meaning, much like the sentences in the book of *Proverbs*, he would run into very great errors. We must never lose sight of the end and design of what is said, if we desire to discover the true meaning of God's word. This we must be particularly careful to do in the books and chapters which are doctrinal, and especially in the Epistles; which is the reason we have been obliged to add a little to the length of the Arguments of those chapters.

If a right judgment be necessary, as we have observed, in order to understand the scriptures, it is not less useful in order to discover the improvement we are to make of them. To this end it must be considered, that the great design of the scriptures, and the use they should be applied to, is to produce in us true faith and the love of God, and thereby bring us to eternal life. *These things are written,* says St John, *that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life thro' his name.* St Paul says likewise, that *whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.* This is the natural and genuine effect of every part of revelation: Its doctrines are revealed, that we may receive them with faith; that they may purify our hearts, and lead us to love and fear God; its commandments were given, that we might keep them; its promises and threatnings tend wholly to dissuade us from that which is evil, and incline us to that which is good; and

and the examples which the scriptures set before us, have the same tendency.

Therefore, whenever we read the scriptures, we must endeavour to discover, first, what is of use to instruct and inform us; and then, what tends to sanctify us, and bring us to God; that what we read may always excite us more and more to piety, and dispose us to live a godly life. Moreover, it is of great importance for every one to take notice of what particularly concerns himself, and what bears the greatest affinity to his own circumstances and necessities. In this impartial application to ourselves of what we meet with in God's word, consists the right use of this book. This St James teaches us, when he says, *If any man be a bearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he becometh himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.* Whereas the wise and faithful hearers of the word, are those who seriously and attentively consider and meditate upon it, and obey its commands. By which the Apostle shews, that the use we must make of the holy scriptures, is to learn obedience; that we must read and hear them with a design to grow better; and that he who does not make this use of them *deceiveth his own soul.*

4. The scriptures must be read with *submission and obedience of faith.* Since it is God who speaks in them, we have nothing to do but to be well assured that we rightly understand their meaning, which is never difficult in things necessary to salvation; and then we are with submission and docility
to

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to receive whatever they reveal, and make that the rule of our faith and practice. Therefore, when we read the histories recorded in the scriptures, we must believe them as firmly as if we were eye-witnesses of every event; which we have the more reason to do, as there is no history which is attended with so many convincing proofs of its truth and certainty.

When the scriptures propose doctrines as the objects of our faith, we must embrace them without the least doubt or hesitation. If the doctrines revealed are of such a nature, that it is impossible fully to comprehend the reason, or the manner of their existence, this should not in the least stagger our faith. We must consider, that the most evident and incontestible truths, if we attempt to fathom them, are attended with difficulties which no one can resolve. Therefore, it must be prudent as well as pious, upon such occasions, not to give way to a spirit of curiosity; to lay aside vain reasonings and rash inquiries, which would only serve to tempt us to doubting and infidelity. God has spoken, and let that suffice.

When we read the commands and precepts which God has given us in his word to be the rule of our actions, it is our duty to believe, that obedience and conformity to them is absolutely and indispensably necessary. And as the sense of the scriptures is never obscure in this respect, and it is impossible we should be deceived, unless we wilfully shut our eyes against the truth; all we have to do is, with humility and an honest heart to submit to whatever God is pleased to command; continually remembering, that as he has an absolute right and authority to command our obedience, so are we sure he will require

require nothing of us, but what tends to make us happy. Should the divine commands appear ever so disagreeable, and thwart our most favourite passions and inclinations, it suffices that God has said, *This do*, to make it our duty to obey; or, *This ye shall not do*, to oblige us to abstain. We must silence our passions, and not listen to the suggestions of our own hearts; for our passions are the enemies which raise all the difficulties we meet with in the way of God's commands, and suggest false reasons to excuse our disobedience. And if to this end it be necessary to resist our inclinations, and do violence to ourselves, let us remember, this is the best proof we can give, that faith and the love of God is the ruling principle of our actions. Resisting our inclinations, and overcoming our natural reluctance, is the only test of our obedience, and a proof that our will is in entire submission to the divine will. But it is a dangerous thing, and repugnant to the nature of faith, to argue when God commands, and to dispute, either about the nature or necessity of our duty. To banish all false reasonings and all vain pretences, whereby men endeavour to elude the express declarations of God's word, is the reason why the apostles, when speaking of the laws by which we shall be judged, so frequently advise us, *Not to be deceived, nor suffer ourselves to be seduced by philosophy and vain deceit*, and the like.

Lastly, This submission must take place, likewise, in the promises and threatnings contained in the scriptures; that is, when they describe the happiness of the life to come, or the punishments reserved for the wicked, we ought no more to doubt of the cer-

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tainty of those promises or threatnings, than if we now actually saw the completion of them, and the great day of retribution was already come. This is one of the principal effects of faith. *Faith, says St Paul, is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.* Now, since such is the nature of that submission of faith, which ought to accompany the reading of the scriptures; if we have it not, we shall read them and hear them in vain. *The word doth not profit, unless it be attended with faith in them that hear it.*

The last disposition with which the scriptures ought to be read, is *piety and devotion.* This disposition is the principal, and includes all the rest. He that reads the scriptures, must have a love for truth and virtue; should have a heart inclined to good, and sincerely desirous to know the will of God and to do it. This upright intention is what our Lord calls in the gospel, *An honest and good heart,* which makes a man, *when he has heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.* This makes the mind attentive, inspires it with that prudence and judgment, which is so necessary to the right understanding of what God would have us know and do to be saved. Those who have this pious intention, this honest heart, fail not to enter into the true sense of the scriptures, and to discover their beauties. This Jesus Christ teaches us, in these remarkable words, *If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of my doctrine.* God manifests himself to those that seek him; and sheds abroad in their hearts

hearts the all-quickning light of his holy spirit, and furnishes them with the most useful knowledge.

To conclude the whole. As the reading of the scriptures requires a *pious* heart, so does it likewise demand a heart truly *devout*. Devotion, which, by the confession of all who make any pretences to religion, is a necessary qualification in prayer, is not less requisite in reading. When God speaks to us in his word, we ought not to be less affected with those sentiments of reverence, zeal, joy, and love, which devotion inspires, than we ought to be when we speak to him in our prayers: Nay, prayer itself should always accompany our reading. There is no better way to prepare to *hear the voice of God*, than to call upon him, and *lift up our hearts unto him*. It is by humbly imploring the assistance of the holy spirit, that we obtain that grace, which prepares the heart, and disposes it to love God and keep his commandments. By this alone, the reading of the holy scriptures will become profitable to our salvation, and bring us to that happy end, for which God was pleased to commit them to writing. God grant, that the reflections now made, and those which are dispersed through the body of this work, may produce this effect on those that read them.

The End of the PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE.

The Order of the Books in the Old and New Testaments.

V O L. I.

G enesis	Judges	I Chronicles
Exodus	Ruth	II Chronicles
Leviticus	I Samuel	Ezra
Numbers	II Samuel	Nehemiah
Deuteronomy	I Kings	Esther
Joshua	II Kings	

V O L. II.


J OB	Lamentations	Jonah
Psalms	Ezekiel	Micah
Proverbs	Daniel	Nahum
Ecclesiastes	Hosea	Habakkuk
The Song of	Joel	Zephaniah
Solomon	Amos	Haggai
Isaiah	Obadiah	Zechariah
Jeremiah		Malachi

V O L. III.

The Books of the New Testament.

M atthew	Ephesians	To the Hebrews
Mark	Philippians	The Epistle of James
Luke	Colossians	I Peter
John	I Thessalonians	II Peter
The Acts	II Thessalonians	I John
The Epistle to the	I Timothy	II John
Romans	II Timothy	III John
I Corinthians	Titus	Jude
II. Corinthians	Philemon	Revelation
Galatians		

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CHAP. I.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

VOL. I.

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chiefly

chiefly learn from this chapter is, that God made man after his own image ; that he gave him dominion over all other creatures, and endowed him with a spiritual and immortal soul, capable of knowing and loving his creator : and, therefore, it is our duty to acknowledge and adore the power, majesty, and wisdom of God, which are so manifest in all his works ; to celebrate his goodness towards us, and continually render him the thanks, love, and obedience which are so justly due to him.

C H A P. II.

I. **A**FTER God had created the world in six days, he sanctifies the seventh day. II. He places *Adam* in the terrestrial paradise, and commands him not to eat of the fruit of a tree, which is called the tree of knowledge of good and evil. III. We have an account of the creation of the woman, and the institution of marriage.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are to observe three things in this chapter : 1. That God, having created the world in six days, rested on the seventh, and hallowed that day ; that the observation of the sabbath-day might serve afterwards, to keep up among men the remembrance of the creation of the world. II. It must be observed, that God placed *Adam* in paradise, that he might be happy ; but, to make trial of his obedience, at the same time gave him a law, attended with severe threatenings ; forbidding him, upon pain of death, to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In this proceeding of the Almighty, we see the great goodness of God towards man in his state of innocence ; but this shews likewise, that man could not be independent ; that he was obliged to sub-

submit to the laws of his creator; and that by his obedience alone, he was entitled to the effects of divine love. III. What *Moses* relates of the institution of marriage, obliges us to acknowledge the great wisdom and goodness of God, appearing in this law, which he made at the beginning, for the good of mankind: It obliges us also to honour marriage as a holy state, which has God for its author; and to avoid every thing that is contrary to so holy an institution; and particularly impurity, and all manner of uncleanness.

C H A P. III.

AFTER *Moses* had given the history of the creation of the world, he gives an account in this chapter, I. How *Adam* and *Eve* fell into sin. And II. How God punished them, by driving them out of paradise, and subjecting them to the miseries of this life, and to death.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE design of this chapter is to inform us, how sin and death came into the world. This account of *Adam's* sin was committed to writing, that it might appear, that God is not the author of sin; but that man fell into it wilfully, and through his own fault. We learn, likewise, from the fall of our first parents, how dangerous it is not to believe what God has declared, to give ear to temptations, and to follow the desires of the flesh; and with how much care we ought to watch over ourselves; and be obedient in all things to the laws of the Lord, even in those things that appear to be of the least importance. We may also learn from what happened to *Adam* and *Eve* after their sin, and the punishment that God inflicted on them, in making them subject

to the miseries of this life, and to death itself, and driving them out of the garden of *Eden*, that the divine threatnings are never in vain, and that God cannot suffer man's disobedience to go unpunished. But the goodness of God, at the same time, appeared in the promise, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*; the meaning of which was, that God would deliver men from sin and death, which were entered into the world by the seducement of the devil. Let us bless God for fulfilling this promise, by sending *Jesus Christ* into the world, to destroy the works of the devil, and to procure us an admission into the heavenly paradise, where he has prepared for us happiness that shall never end.

C H A P. IV.

I. **M**OSES recites the birth of *Cain* and *Abel*, *Cain's* killing his brother, and his punishment. II. After this, he gives a list of the posterity of *Cain*, and mentions the birth of *Setb*, another son of *Adam*, from whom the patriarchs descended.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS chapter proposes to us two remarkable examples: The first is that of *Abel*; who, as *St Paul* says, *through faith offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain*, and obtained witness that he was righteous; but, notwithstanding his righteousness, was exposed to the envy and cruelty of his brother, who killed him. Thus God was pleased to shew, from the beginning of the world, that he accepts the service of none but good people, whom, nevertheless, he suffers sometimes to be oppressed by the wicked; a proof, from the very first, that piety is not to expect its reward in this life. The other example is that of *Cain*, in whom we have an image of

of wicked men, and particularly of such as hate their brethren, and an instance of the ill effects of envy and jealousy. We may also observe, in the remorse and terrors that haunted *Cain* after he had committed this horrid deed, that a guilty conscience is generally tormented with horror and remorse. The genealogy of *Cain's* descendants was preserved, to shew the distinction there was afterwards, between the impious posterity of *Cain*, and that of *Seth*, the son of *Adam*, from whom the patriarchs and the Messiah descended.

C H A P. V.

THIS chapter contains the names of the patriarchs, and their genealogy from *Adam* to *Noah*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are two principal observations to be made upon this chapter: The first is, upon the long lives of the patriarchs. God was pleased to give them such long lives, that by this means the world might be sooner peopled, and the knowledge of the deity, and the remembrance of the creation, more easily and more surely preserved. The second reflection, is that which *St Paul* makes in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, where he says, that *Enoch was translated, and saw not death, because he was acceptable to God whilst he lived*. God thought fit thus to recompence the righteousness of this patriarch, and to convince the men of that time, that there is another life after this, reserved for good men. This is a truth which is still more clearly proved in the gospel, and particularly, by the ascension of *Jesus Christ*. Those, therefore, who shall imitate righteous *Enoch*, and walk with God as he did, and study to please him by

a holy and religious life, shall be admitted, after death, into that place to which he was translated, and whither our Lord is gone to prepare a place for us.

C H A P. VI.

GOD, seeing the extreme corruption of mankind, resolves to send a deluge upon the earth; and commands *Noah* to build an ark for himself and his family, and all other creatures that God was pleased to preserve.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are to observe in this chapter, in the first place, that the marriages of the posterity of *Setb* with the daughters of *Cain*, occasioned that impurity and injustice, and all those other sins which were multiplied upon the earth, even among the descendants of *Setb*; which obliged God to bring the flood upon it. From whence we learn, that intercourse with the wicked and ungodly is a very dangerous thing; and, in particular, that uncleanness and sensuality have always been the occasion of great evils; and, that this sin, as well as violence and injustice, exposes men to the wrath of God. II. The goodness and patience of God towards the inhabitants of the first world is very visible, in his giving them an hundred and twenty years to repent in, and warning them by the preaching of *Noah*, and by the building of the ark, that the flood was coming upon the earth. Thus has God, in all ages, exercised great patience and long-suffering towards men, giving them necessary warning of their danger, and time to prevent his judgments. III. In the command God gave to *Noah* to build an ark, we should consider the care he takes of those that fear him, and the wonder-
ful

ful means he was pleased to use, in his great wisdom, for the preservation of man and beast, that the earth might be replenished after the flood. IV. and lastly, We observe in this chapter, the faith and obedience of *Noah*, who being warned by God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. This reflection, which St Paul makes in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the *Hebrews*, engages us to imitate the faith of this patriarch, to walk in righteousness as he did, and to make a right use of the patience of God, who invites us to repentance; that we may avoid those judgments which will surely fall upon the wicked, and be saved with those whom he will receive into his heavenly kingdom.

C H A P. VII.

THIS chapter contains the history of the flood, from which *Noah* was preserved in the ark, with his family, and those creatures which were with him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE history of the flood is very remarkable; it being the most signal example God has given of his justice since the creation of the world. It is too a most certain fact, the remembrance of which has been preserved among all nations, and in the most ancient authors, as well as in the holy scriptures. St Peter teaches us the use we ought to make of this history, when he says, *If God spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.* Let us seriously

reflect upon this great example ; let us learn from hence that God is just ; that his threatnings are not in vain ; and that the great number of sinners cannot secure them from his vengeance. Moreover, let us consider, that as they who were not in the ark perished, so those who shall neglect to enter into the way of salvation, and to lay hold of the long-suffering of God, shall also inevitably perish. This is what *Jesus Christ* warns us of in the gospel, when he says, that it will be at the day of his coming *as in the days of Noah* ; when the inhabitants of the first world lived in security, and thought nothing of the flood, till it came upon them, and destroyed *them all*. Thus will sinners be surprized at the coming of *Jesus Christ* to judge the world, and to render to all men according to their works.

C H A P. VIII.

MOSES relates in this chapter, *Noah's* going out of the ark, after the waters of the deluge were dried up, and his offering a sacrifice to the Lord ; in consequence of which, God restored the order of nature.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT we are principally to observe here is, that God, after he had given the most dreadful proofs of his severity in the deluge, gave marks of his goodness, not only towards *Noah* and his family, but towards the whole race of mankind, by restoring the world to that state and order which we now see it in. And since we enjoy the effects of God's goodness, we ought to render him our thanks for it, and stir up ourselves to love and fear him, from the consideration of his mercy, as well as of his justice,

Justice, which both remarkably appear in the several circumstances of the universal deluge.

C H A P. IX.

HERE we observe three things: I. The laws which God gave *Noah*, and all mankind, after the flood, especially those relating to food, which was then altered, and to murder. II. God's promise never to drown the world again. III. What happened to *Noah*, when being overtaken with wine, his son *Ham* derided him. IV. *Moses*, at the end of the chapter, mentions the death of *Noah*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That we ought inviolably to observe those laws which God gave *Noah* after the deluge; that we ought to use soberly those creatures which he allows us to partake of, and to avoid all cruelty and injustice. II. That the covenant God made with *Noah* and all mankind, promising never more to bring a general deluge upon the earth, but to preserve the world in the condition it was then in, has subsisted ever since; and, consequently, all of us are bound to acknowledge and celebrate the great goodness of the Lord towards us, of which we continually feel the effects. III. That if the world is no more to be destroyed by water, it will be by fire, at the last day, according to St *Peter*. *If the old world, being overflowed by water, perished, the heaven and the earth are reserved for fire at the day of judgment.* IV. As to what is said, at the end of this chapter, of *Noah's* being overtaken with wine, it must be considered, that this happened to him innocently, because he was unacquainted with the effect of wine, the use of it having been till then unknown; and therefore this example, so far from
excusing,

excusing intemperance, is a proof that we ought carefully to avoid it. What is related of the sons of *Noah*, teaches us, that God blesses those children who honour their parents, and curses those who are wanting in that respect which is due to them.

C H A P. X.

THIS chapter names the descendants of *Shem*, *Ham*, and *Japhet*, the three sons of *Noah*, by whom the earth was peopled again after the flood.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THOUGH this chapter contains nothing but the names of men and people, it is, nevertheless, very remarkable; as we see here the origin of all the nations of the world, and the first beginning of monarchy. What *Moses* here sets down, serves to confirm the genealogy of the patriarchs, from whom our Lord is descended; so that this chapter furnishes us with a good and convincing proof of the truth of the sacred history, and of the divine authority of these books; what *Moses* here says being perfectly agreeable to the most antient and most authentic histories of the several people of the world, and the countries which they have inhabited.

C H A P. XI:

I. **M**OSE informs us, in this chapter, that men attempting to build the city and tower of *Babel*, God confounded their language; which occasioned their being dispersed throughout the whole earth. **II.** He gives an account of the descendants of *Shem*, the son of *Noah*, down to *Abraham*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E relation *Moses* gives of the dispersion, that happened when the descendants of *Noah* undertook to build the tower of *Babel*, serves to instruct us in the sequel of the sacred history, and how the several countries of the world came to be inhabited. II. God thought fit thus to disperse those who pretended to secure themselves from any future deluge, by building this tower, that he might punish their pride and impiety; and, likewise, that the earth might be more speedily inhabited. As to the genealogy of the posterity of *Shem*, we must observe two things: one is, that though the lives of men were then much shorter than before the flood, they were, nevertheless, much longer than they are at present: the other is, that this genealogy was preserved, to shew *Abraham's* descent from *Shem*, the son of *Noah*.

C H A P. XII.

TH I S chapter begins the history of *Abraham*; in which we are informed, I. That the patriarch left his own country, at God's command, to come into the land of *Canaan*, which the Lord promised to give him. II. That he was forced, by a famine, to go down into *Egypt*, where *Pharaoh*, the king, took away his wife from him, and afterwards restored her again.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are to consider, in this chapter, I. That God called *Abraham*, and made a covenant with him; in order to preserve the true religion among his posterity, from which the Messiah was one day to descend. II. That *Abraham* obeyed the calling of God,

God, believing in his promises, though they were not immediately accomplished ; that he was exposed to several troubles ; that he dwelt in the land of *Canaan* as a stranger, and was forced by famine to go into *Egypt*, where he had like to have lost his wife. *St Paul* teaches us the use we are to make of this account of the calling of *Abraham*, in the eleventh chapter to the *Hebrews*: *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country. Let us learn, by this example of Abraham, to follow our call, and to obey God in all his commands, how difficult soever they may appear to us; to live like strangers in this world, and not to seek our true country here, but in heaven; waiting, like our father Abraham, for that city which is to come, whose builder and maker is God. The plagues with which God smote the king of Egypt, because he had taken away Sarah with an intention to marry her, shew, that adultery is a sin very odious in the sight of God. And we see, in the manner of Pharaoh's reproving Abraham, that that prince was not ignorant how great this sin was. It is, however, to be remarked, that the king of Egypt conferred many favours on Abraham, and that this patriarch carried away great riches out of that country: thus did he begin to experience the effects of the divine blessing and protection.*

C H A P. XIII.

- I. **A** *Brabam* and *Lot* being returned from *Egypt* into the land of *Canaan*, separated from each other, not being able to live together, by reason of their great possessions. II. *Lot* settled at *Sodom*, and
Abraham

Abram dwelt in the land of *Canaan*, which God again promised to give him for an inheritance.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE great riches which God gave to *Abram*, should be considered as an effect of the blessing which he had promised him; by which we may learn, that the promises of God are always fulfilled, and that he does sometimes bestow upon them that fear him, even the blessings of this present life. The dispute that happened between the servants of *Lot*, and the servants of *Abram*, and the moderation of the latter, who gave his nephew *Lot* the choice of fixing where he pleased, is a lesson to us, to avoid those quarrels that are usually occasioned by worldly goods; to make the first advances towards an accommodation, and to renounce even our own advantage for the sake of peace. The choice that *Lot* made of the country of *Sodom*, which was very fruitful, and very pleasant, but its inhabitants, even then, very corrupt, and threatened with the judgments of God, teaches us, not always to look at the advantages and conveniences of life; that it is a dangerous thing to live where ease and plenty reign, and that we ought to shun the company of bad men. Lastly, We may see, in the repetition of the promises that God made to *Abram*, God's unalterable love to his children, and the goodness wherewith he supports their faith, in those trials which he exposes them to.

C H A P. XIV.

I. THIS chapter contains the history of the war between the king of *Sodom*, and his neighbours, and the king of *Elam*, and his confederates; in which war, the king of *Sodom* was overthrown, and *Lot* taken, with all his substance; but *Abram* defeated

defeated the king of *Elam*, and delivered *Lot*. II. As he was returning from the victory, *Melchisedek* met him, and brought him bread and wine; and *Abraham* gave him the tenth part of all the spoil which he had taken.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE defeat of the king of *Sodom*, is to be looked upon as a punishment which God inflicted upon the inhabitants of that city, for their great wickedness, and as a presage of their total destruction. What befel *Lot*, who was taken prisoner in that war, shews, that they who dwell among the wicked, are often involved in the divine judgments which fall upon them; and that, therefore, it is dangerous to have any intercourse with them. *Abraham's* victory is a mark of God's blessing upon that patriarch, and of his protection of *Lot*. It shews also, that it is lawful to make war in a just cause, and in one's own defence. Lastly, What is here said of *Melchisedek*, who was king of *Salem*, and a priest of the most high God, proves, that the true God was known and worshipped in that country; and ought to put us in mind of what *St Paul* saith in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, that this *Melchisedek*, who blessed *Abraham*, and to whom that patriarch gave the tenth of all, represented *Jesus Christ* our Lord, the king and high-priest of the church; who was to reign over all things, and exercise a more excellent and perfect priesthood than that of the *Jewish* high-priest, or of *Melchisedek* himself.

C H A P. XV.

GOD renews the promise that he had made to *Abraham*, of giving him a son, and a numerous

rous posterity, which should possess the land of *Canaan*; and confirms that promise to him by a sign.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we observe three things: I. That God renewed the promises he had made to *Abraham*, and confirmed them by a miraculous sign. II. That *Abraham's* believing God, was imputed to him for righteousness. III. That God declared to him, that those promises should not be accomplished in his life, and even that his posterity should be afflicted for a time; which suggests to us these reflections: 1. That God in his goodness has, in all ages, thought fit to confirm the faith of those he loves by external signs; which he still does in the sacraments, which we ought to esteem at the highest rate. 2. That all those who believe in him, and obey him, as *Abraham* did, shall be justified. 3. That the children of God do often meet with afflictions in this world; and will not, till after this life, see the full completion of those promises that God has made them.

C H A P. XVI.

IN this chapter we have, I. An account of the birth of *Ismael*, the son of *Hagar*. II. *Hagar's* leaving her master's house, and flying from *Sarah*: and the angel's prediction, that *Ismael* should be a powerful prince, and have a numerous posterity.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE marriage of *Abraham* with *Hagar*, must be looked upon as one of those things which God tolerated at that time, because of the condition men were then in; but which were contrary to the first institution of marriage, and therefore are absolutely forbidden by the laws of the gospel: and the divisions

divisions which happened upon that occasion in *Abraham's* family, shew, that such marriages are commonly attended with fatal consequences. However, it is to be observed, that God took care of *Hagar's* child, promising to bless it, because it was the son of *Abraham*; which also came to pass, the posterity of *Ismael* being very numerous, and very powerful afterwards, and subsisting for many ages, as we learn from history.

C H A P. XVII.

I. **G**OD renews his covenant with *Abraham*, and the promises he had made him; and, to assure him of the certainty of his promises, he changes his name. II. He gives him the law of circumcision, and foretels the birth of *Isaac*. III. *Abraham*, in obedience to the command of God, was circumcised, and all his family.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT we are chiefly to learn from this chapter, containing the institution of circumcision, is what *St Paul* observes in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the *Romans*, namely, that *Abraham* was justified by faith before he received the sign of circumcision; from whence he concludes, that neither circumcision, nor any other external rite, can make a man acceptable to God; and, that nothing but a sincere faith, attended with obedience, can produce this effect. Nevertheless, this same history shews, that the external signs of the divine covenant are not to be neglected or despised; and particularly, the ceremonies and sacraments which God has appointed as means to strengthen our faith, and confirm his promises; but, on the contrary, that we ought to respect and observe them religiously, and

to make such a use of them as may serve to confirm us in the faith and love of God, and excite us more and more to holiness of life.

C H A P. XVIII.

I. **T**HREE angels appear to *Abraham*, promising the birth of *Isaac*, and acquainting him, that God was going to destroy *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*. II. *Abraham* intercedes with the Lord for the inhabitants of *Sodom*, but in vain; God assuring him, that the wickedness of that people was at the height, and their destruction determined and unavoidable.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THREE are four things chiefly to be observed in this chapter, I. The first is, the reflection which *St Paul* makes in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, upon *Abraham's* receiving the three angels who appeared to him: *Be not forgetful*, says he, *to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares*. II. The second reflection is, that *Abraham* had been many years without the Son which God had promised him; but that the angels declared at last to him, that *Isaac* should be born that year. Thus the promises of God always prove true, though the performance of them be sometimes delayed. III. It is to be observed in the third place, that God, when he was going to destroy *Sodom*, thought fit to reveal his design to *Abraham*, that the patriarch might be convinced this overthrow proceeded from God, and might thereby be engaged to continue always in the fear of God, to trust in his promises, and to promote piety and religion in his family. By this we see that God reveals himself to those who serve him faithfully; that the consideration of the divine judgments is a motive to fear him;

that it is the duty of parents to take care that their children walk in the ways of the Lord, and that God blesses the posterity of the upright. IV. The fourth reflection concerns the intercession of *Abraham* in behalf of the people of *Sodom*, and God's refusing to pardon them, because there were not ten righteous men to be found in the whole city. Let us learn from hence to pray one for another, and to endeavour in particular to turn away the wrath of God from those who are threatned with it; that God has a great regard to the prayers, and to the holiness of good men; that he sometimes spares towns and people for their sake; but that when their number is very small, and wickedness and impiety prevail, the prayers of the righteous are unprofitable, and nothing can then screen a people from the divine vengeance.

C H A P. XIX.

I. **T**HIS chapter contains the history of the destruction of *Sodom*, and the places about it, which were consumed by fire from heaven. II. *Lot* was preserved from that destruction, and retreated to *Zoar*, with his two daughters.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

LET us learn from the memorable history of the destruction of *Sodom* and the neighbouring cities, I. That what occasioned the inhabitants of these cities to fall into those abominable crimes was, as one of the prophets says concerning them, *Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness*, as well as hardness of heart to the poor and needy. Let us observe by this example, how dangerous it is to live too much in ease and pleasures, and in particular, to what excess sensuality and impurity may lead men. II. The

C H A P. XIX.

The dreadful judgment of God upon *Sodom*, is a proof of the judgment and condemnation reserved for the ungodly, and in particular, for those who give themselves up to vile affections. This is what *St Peter* teaches us, when he says, that *God turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, and condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly; reserving the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished; and chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness.* III. The same apostle remarks on this history, that God delivered just *Lot* from the overthrow of *Sodom*: that this righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds; and that therefore the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations and afflictions. IV. We find in this history, that *Lot's* sons in law perished in the destruction of *Sodom*, because they despised the warning which *Lot* gave them; and that his wife was turned into a pillar of salt, for looking back and having her heart and affections engaged on that city from whence she came out. These two examples teach us not to neglect the warning God gives us, to dread his threatenings, and to obey his call, without regarding the things of the world, lest we be condemned with the world: this is what *Jesus Christ* exhorts us to when he says in the gospel, *Remember Lot's wife.* Lastly, That which happened to *Lot* himself, and his two daughters, after he had escaped from the overthrow of *Sodom*, should engage us to be at all times upon our guard, and avoid all temptations to sin, especially those of drunkenness and intemperance, which are generally attended with fatal consequences.

G E N E S I S,

C H A P. XX.

A *Brabam* goes to *Gerar*, and dwells there. The king of that place, *Abimelech*, takes his wife from him; but at the command of God restores her to him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **W**HAT happened to *Abraham* when *Abimelech* took his wife from him, and the punishment that God inflicted on that prince for it, shews, that *Abraham* was exposed to a great many troubles, but that God was ever with him and protected him. II. It appears secondly, from this history, that the true God was known in that country where *Abraham* then was, and that they had some fear and reverence for the deity; as God's appearing to *Abimelech*, and that king's answer, clearly evince. III. The obedience of *Abimelech* in restoring *Sarah*, as soon as God had made known to him, that she was *Abraham's* wife, and his abhorrence of the sin of adultery, shew that he was afraid to offend God; so that that prince will rise up in judgment against many Christian princes, who, being so clearly instructed in the will of God, have no regard to it, but abandon themselves to sin, and particularly to all manner of impurity. Lastly, 'God's healing of *Abimelech*, after he had restored *Sarah*, and *Abraham* had prayed for him, is a proof that God pardons sins of ignorance; that he withholds his chastisement as soon as we forbear sinning; and that he has likewise great regard to the prayers and intercession of good men.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXI.

I. **T**HIS chapter gives an account of the birth of *Isaac*. II. The reason of *Ishmael's* being driven out of *Abraham's* house, with *Hagar* his mother; and the manner of God's preserving *Ishmael's* life. III. The league between *Abraham* and king *Abimelech*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE first reflection on this chapter relates to the birth of *Isaac*, who was born to *Abraham*, though the patriarch and *Sarah* his wife were very old. In this event were fulfilled God's promises of giving *Abraham* a son, who should be his heir, and partake of the divine covenant. We observe, moreover, in this event the efficacy of faith; since, as *St Paul* says in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, it was through faith in the promises of God, that *Abraham* and *Sarah* had this son according to the promise. II. Upon *Ishmael's* being cast out of *Abraham's* house, and excluded from being his heir, *St Paul* makes this remark, that all those who descended from *Abraham*, were not counted his children, nor partakers of the divine election; that God bestows his favours upon whom he pleases, and in such measure as he thinks fit; and that neither carnal birth, nor an outward profession of religion, avail any thing without a true faith. It is, however, to be observed, that God blessed *Ishmael*, because he was descended from *Abraham*; though he was excluded from those advantages which were promised to *Isaac*. God distributes his favours in a different degree; but he does good to all, even to those who are excluded from some particular privileges. III. And lastly, The league which *Abraham*,

ham made with *Abimelech* shews, that the children of God may make treaties and alliances for their security; and that such treaties ought to be inviolably observed.

C H A P. XXII.

THIS chapter contains the history of *Abraham's* sacrifice, and the names of his brother *Nahor's* children.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE should consider this beautiful history with great attention: I. Here we see, first, the truth of what *St Paul* and *St James* teach us, that *Abraham* shewed his faith by his works, when God tried him, and commanded him to offer up his only son; which is an evident proof that wherever true faith is, it leads men to do whatever God commands; and consequently, that we cannot please God nor be justified without obedience, and without good works. II. This admirable example of the obedience of *Abraham*, who obeyed the divine command in so difficult a point, teaches us to love God above all things, to be ready to offer up to him all that is most dear to us, and to submit ourselves to his will, even in the most hard and severe trials, and always trust in his providence. III. The repeated assurances God gave *Abraham* of his favour, deserve particularly to be attended to, who said unto him by his angel, after the patriarch had given proof of his obedience: *Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son from me; because thou hast done this, I will surely bless thee.* Though we owe our being and all that we have to God, and what we do deserves no reward, yet he graciously accepts our endeavours to please

please him, and to express our love to him, and rewards them abundantly. IV. And lastly, The proof *Abraham* gave of his love to God, in offering up *Isaac*, should lead us to consider the infinite love that God has shewn to us, in delivering his only Son *Jesus Christ* our Lord to die for us, and should engage us to love him, and most heartily thank him for his mercy towards us.

C H A P. XXIII.

SARAH being dead, *Abraham* buys a field of the children of *Heb* to bury her in. .

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE history contained in this chapter teaches us, not to neglect the duties of interment, and not to grieve excessively for the dead. But the chief reflection is, that *Abraham's* desire to have his wife buried in the land of *Canaan*, and his purchasing a burying-place there, is a mark of his faith and firm persuasion, that God would give that country to his posterity. We ought to learn from hence, to trust in the promises of God, and to expect from him the raising of our bodies, he having so expressly promised it in the gospel, and we having so strong a proof of it in the burial and resurrection of *Jesus Christ*.

C H A P. XXIV.

THIS is the history of *Isaac's* marriage with *Rebecca*, daughter of *Bethuel*, and granddaughter of *Nabor*, *Abraham's* brother.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this history we are chiefly to observe the piety and faith of *Abraham*, who would not have his son marry

a *Canaanitish* and idolatrous woman, but would marry him in his own family; and likewise the piety of his servant, who prayed to God for success in his journey; and when he had succeeded in his undertaking, did not forget to offer up most hearty thanks and praise to God. This ought to be an instruction and example to us, to have God in view in all our undertakings, and especially in that of marriage; which ought to be performed according to the rules of religion and holiness, that we may obtain his blessing upon it.

C H A P. XXV.

THIS chapter gives an account, I. Of *Abraham's* marriage with *Keturah*, his second wife. II. Of the death of *Abraham*. III. Of the descendants of *Ismael*, and his death. IV. Of the birth of *Esau* and *Jacob*, the sons of *Isaac*; and lastly, Of *Esau's* selling his birthright to *Jacob* his brother.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

ST *Paul* observes on the death of *Abraham*, that he died, as the other patriarchs did, without seeing the accomplishment of God's promises, he being a stranger and sojourner on the earth. From whence we may infer, that God reserved a heavenly country for them. The increase of *Ismael's* posterity, shews the truth of those promises that God had made to *Abraham*. The choice which God made of *Jacob*, preferably to his elder brother *Esau*, and his descendants, teaches us, as St *Paul* also observes in the epistle to the *Romans*, that God is free in the distribution of his favours, and does bestow them as he pleases; and that all those who descended from the patriarchs were not for that reason esteemed the true people of God. Lastly, *Esau's*
con-

contempt of his birthright, selling it to *Jacob*, from a spirit of sensuality and profaneness, should teach us to esteem the grace of God above all things, and not to prefer the profits and pleasures of this world to spiritual and heavenly blessings. This is *St Paul's* advice, when he says, *Let no one be a fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for a morsel of meat sold his birthright.*

C H A P. XXVI.

I. **I**SAAC retires into the country of the *Philistines*, upon account of the famine, where God renews his promises to him, and gives him fresh proofs of his protection and favour. II. The ill treatment of the *Philistines* obliges him to leave that country, and come to *Bersheba*, where he builds an altar to the Lord, and makes a covenant with *Abimelech*, the king of *Gerar*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN the life of *Isaac*, as well as in that of *Abraham*, we see a mixture of prosperity and adversity. The great riches of *Isaac*, and the covenant he made with *Abimelech*, are the effect of God's blessing upon that patriarch; but the dangers to which he was exposed in the country of the *Philistines*, and the frequent quarrels raised against him, were the adversities with which God tried him, and engaged him to leave that country. Thus all men, and especially the children of God, have a share sometimes of prosperity, and sometimes of adversity; but what place, and what condition soever they that fear God are in, the divine favour and protection does always accompany them, and deliver them from all their troubles.

C H A P. XXVII.

MOSES relates how *Jacob* obtained, by surprise, the blessing, which *Isaac* his father intended for *Esau*. When *Esau* knew it, he was so angry, that he resolved to kill his brother *Jacob*; which obliged *Rebecca* to send *Jacob* into *Mesopotamia*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

UPON this history we must observe, that *Jacob* obtained the blessing of his father by treachery, and yet God permitted it so to happen, and was pleased that the blessing should take place, because *Esau* was unworthy of it; and because the promises made to *Abraham* and *Isaac* were to be fulfilled in *Jacob*. Thus God often permits things that he does not approve, and makes use of the sins of men to bring about the designs of his providence, without being the author of those sins. As for the concern that *Esau* expressed, when he saw his father would not alter nor revoke the blessing he had given to *Jacob*, as it proceeded only from a carnal temper, and from jealousy and rage against his brother, whom he was determined to kill, it cannot be looked upon as a mark of true repentance. St Paul's reflection upon this subject is: *Let no one be a profane person, as Esau, who, when he would have inherited the blessing, was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.* Let us be wise by this example, which represents that despair which will torment the wicked, when they shall find themselves shut out of the kingdom of God. Lastly, The retreat of *Jacob*, who went to *Mesopotamia*, to avoid his brother's anger, teaches us wisely to shun dangers, and to give way for a time to the malice and injustice of those who seek to hurt us. Besides, this flight of *Jacob*,
which

which was a severe trial to him and his father *Isaac*, and seemed to be an obstacle to his happiness, was the means which providence made use of to make him richer, and happier, and more powerful than he would have been in his father's house; as by the sequel of this history will appear. Thus God sometimes turns into a blessing, that which is looked upon as a great misfortune; which should be, to good men, a powerful motive to rely upon the divine providence.

C H A P. XXVIII.

I. **J**ACOB goes into *Mesopotamia*, by his father *Isaac*'s command, to marry into the family of *Laban*, his mother's brother. II. God, in the night, appears to him on the way, in the vision of a ladder which reached from earth to heaven, and promises to bless him; for which *Jacob* expressed his gratitude, by worshipping God in that place, and making a vow to give him the tenth of all that he should possess.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE command which *Isaac* gave his son *Jacob*, to go into *Mesopotamia*, there to take a wife, and the prayers he offered up for success in his journey, are proofs of the piety of that holy patriarch, and of his firm confidence in the promises of God. The effect of *Isaac*'s prayers appeared in what happened to *Jacob* as soon as he was set out for *Mesopotamia*, and particularly in the vision of the ladder, which he saw in a dream, to assure him that God would be with him wherever he went. This example shews, that the Lord is present with his children wherever they are, and that he employs his angels for their security and defence. Let us next acknowledge

ledge the piety of *Jacob*, who asked of God only bread to eat, and clothes to cover him; and who vowed to consecrate to God the place where he had seen the vision, and the tenth of all his substance. Let us imitate so great an example; let us be contented if God gives us food and raiment; and let us make it an indispensable duty to devote to him some part of our substance, to shew by this, as by every other means in our power, our piety and gratitude.

C H A P. XXIX.

JACOB comes to his uncle *Laban*, and marries his two daughters, *Leah* and *Rachel*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E chief thing to be observed in this chapter is, that God, according to his promises, accompanied *Jacob* in his journey; and brought him safely to the house of *Laban*, where he married, and by that means gave him several children, who were heads and fathers of the people of *Israel*. Nevertheless, it must be remembered, that the marriages of *Jacob*, who had several wives together, being contrary to the first institution of marriage, God did not approve of them, though he tolerated them, for reasons resulting from the nature of the men of those times, and from the designs of his providence; wherefore those irregularities have since been abolished by the law of *Jesus Christ*, who has entirely restored the laws of marriage and of chastity, as we see in the gospel.

C H A P. XXX.

I. **M**OSES mentions the birth of the children which *Jacob* had by his wives. II. After *Jacob* had lived several years with *Laban* his father-in-law, he would have returned into his own country ; but *Laban* prevailed upon him to stay still longer with him, for wages which he agreed to give him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **U**PON this, as well as the foregoing chapter, it must be observed, that the great number of children born to *Jacob*, served to make his posterity exceeding numerous ; though God did not approve all the marriages he had contracted, as was before observed. The jealousy and divisions between *Jacob's* wives, as well as the great irregularities of most of his children, are a sufficient proof that those marriages were attended with very bad consequences. II. Observe, secondly, that though *Laban* meant *Jacob* no good, but evil, and kept him only for his own interest ; God blessed *Jacob* still more than before, and increased his substance and his flocks exceedingly. The means which *Jacob* made use of to increase his cattle, would not have been lawful, had not God, to reward him for the unjust treatment he received from *Laban*, given him authority so to do, as we learn in the following chapter. God, to bring about his purposes, sometimes permits men to make use of means, which would not be innocent in other circumstances ; he brings good out of evil, and makes even sin contribute to the execution of his designs : but this by no means gives us authority to do any thing that is bad. And Christians especially, who are much more enlightened than men were in the times

times of the patriarchs, ought never to depart from the most exact rules of piety, purity, and justice.

C H A P. XXXI.

I. **J**ACOB having lived twenty years with *Laban* his father-in-law, returns to *Canaan*, by God's command, with his family and all his substance, without acquainting *Laban* with it. II. *Laban*, being informed of it, pursues him, but God suffered him not to do *Jacob* any hurt; so that he let him go in peace, and even made a covenant with him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS history presents us with the following observations: I. That God blessed *Jacob* with great riches, in the house of *Laban*, as he had promised him. II. That God commanded *Jacob* to return into the land of *Canaan*, which he was to inherit, having beforehand prepared him to leave *Mesopotamia*, by the unjust and cruel treatment of *Laban*. III. That *Laban*, enraged at the departure of *Jacob*, pursued him at first with a full intent to do him some injury; but God forbidding him to hurt *Jacob*, they were reconciled, and made a covenant together. Thus God blesses those he loves; thus he guides and preserves them from the dangers that threaten them, and turns the hearts of their enemies in their favour. Let it be observed further, that *Rachel*, when she left her father's house, took with her the idols which were in the house; for which *Laban* reproached *Jacob* very severely. This shews, that though the true God was known in the family of *Laban*, idolatry began to get ground; and therefore it was necessary *Jacob* and his family should leave that country, and return to the place where *Isaac* his father lived, to worship God with purity.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXXII.

I. **J**ACOB being informed that his brother *Eſau* was coming to meet him with four hundred men, implores the divine aſſiſtance, and ſends preſents to *Eſau*, to pacify him. II. An angel wreſtles with *Jacob*, bleſſes him, gives him the name of *Iſrael*, and aſſures him that God will defend him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E example of *Jacob*, who, in the danger that threatned him, implored the divine aſſiſtance, and endeavoured to pacify his brother by his ſubmiſſion, teaches us to have recourſe to God in all our dangers; to join prudence to our prayers; and to uſe all our endeavours to pacify thoſe who are exaſperated againſt us, and to bring about a reconciliation. II. It appears that *Jacob* was very rich in cattle, ſince in the preſent he ſent his brother, there was a great number of camels and domeſtic animals. III. The piety, humility, and gratitude with which *Jacob* returned thanks to God for his protection and bleſſings beſtowed upon him, teach us to thank God, and humble ourſelves before him, acknowledging his favours towards us, and our own unworthineſs. IV. Upon the wreſtling of *Jacob* with the angel, we muſt obſerve, that God was pleaſed, by this means, to aſſure him that he had nothing to fear from his brother *Eſau*, and that he ſhould be ſtronger than all his enemies; for the ſame reaſon, the angel gave *Jacob* the name of *Iſrael*, which ſignifies, he that hath prevailed with God. However, it is to be obſerved, that in this rencounter *Jacob* became lame; to be a memento to him all his life, of what had happened on this occaſion; and to remind him, that he with whom he had ſtrove, was an angel

gel of God ; and if he had been conqueror, it was because God was pleased to grant him the victory. Lastly, We must observe with the prophet *Hosea*, that it was by prayers and tears, and by supplication for mercy, that the patriarch prevailed when he wrestled with God. From whence we may learn the efficacy of prayer, when it is performed with faith, zeal, and perseverance.

C H A P. XXXIII.

MOSES relates, I. What passed in the interview between *Jacob* and *Esau*. II. *Jacob's* arrival at *Shechem*, where he built an altar to the Lord.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE have seen, in this chapter, how *Jacob* pacified his brother *Esau* by his respect and submission, and how God protected and brought him safe into the land of *Canaan*. Here we may be convinced, that God hears and delivers those that trust in him ; that he turns the hearts of their enemies ; and that meekness and humility go a great way in appeasing those that are provoked. The care that *Jacob* took to build an altar in the place where he settled, was an effect of his piety, and teaches us diligently to discharge the duties of religion, and thereby to testify our gratitude to God for his favours to us.

C H A P. XXXIV.

SHECHEM takes away *Dinah*, the daughter of *Jacob*, and obtains her in marriage, on condition that all the inhabitants of his city should be circumcised ; which, when done, two of *Jacob's* sons took that opportunity to slay the inhabitants of *Shechem*.

R E F L E C -

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E S E are the instructions which this history affords us: I. That which happened to *Dinah*, when she was going to visit the *Shechemites*, teaches us to avoid all occasions of falling into temptation, or leading others into it. II. The revenge of the sons of *Jacob* for the violence committed upon their sister, is to be accounted a treacherous, base, cruel, and even impious action; since they made use of the pretext of religion to murder the *Shechemites*; and it was accordingly censured by *Jacob*, who reproached his sons with this crime upon his death bed. III. It must be observed, that although this was an unjust action, yet God suffered it, in order to punish *Shechem* for the crime he had committed. IV. We see by this event what great evils are occasioned by impurity, and that we ought not to follow the dictates of revenge. Lastly, This accident is to be looked upon as a trial that God thought fit to bring upon *Jacob*, and as a means made use of by his providence, to hinder the patriarch from settling in that country at that time.

C H A P. XXXV.

I. *JACOB* puts away the idols from his family, and journeys to *Bethel*, where he builds an altar to the Lord, and where God renews the promises he had made him. II. After that, he departs from *Bethel*; his wife *Rachel* dies in childbed of *Benjamin*; and he arrives with all his family in *Hebron*, at his father *Isaac's*, whose death is also here related.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter are to be observed, I. *Jacob's* frequent changing of his dwelling, and the afflictions
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with which God visited him, particularly by the death of *Rachel*; whereby it appears, that the patriarchs had no settled state in the land of *Canaan*, nor any happiness secured to them upon earth; and that their country was in heaven. II. We see also, that wherever *Jacob* went, God appeared to him, and repeated his promises, and the assurances of his protection; from whence we are to acknowledge, that God is every where with those that fear him, and never withdraws his love from them. III. The care that *Jacob* took to banish idolatry out of his family, burying the idols which his people carried with them, and to fulfil the vow that he had made, to worship God at *Bethel*, where he had appeared to him as he went into *Mesopotamia*, is a noble example of piety and gratitude, which we ought to imitate. IV. The horrid crime which *Reuben* committed, mentioned in this chapter, was a great affliction to *Jacob* his father, who reproached him for it before his death, and punished him, by taking from him his right of first-born. Lastly, *Moses* informs us, that *Isaac* lived to an extreme old age, and that he had the comfort before his death of seeing again his son *Jacob* crowned with the blessings of heaven: which was a very sensible proof of God's love to *Isaac*, and a reward of his piety bestowed on him by God in this world.

C H A P. XXXVI.

THIS chapter contains a genealogy of the descendants of *Esau*, *Jacob*'s brother.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IT appears from this chapter, that after *Jacob* and *Esau* parted, *Esau* acquired great riches, and had a numerous and powerful posterity, which subsisted a long

long time in a very flourishing condition, though he had no share in the divine covenant, as *Jacob* had. Thus the promises of God made to him by his father *Isaac* were fulfilled. God, who dispenses his blessings as he pleases, does not bestow them on all men in an equal degree; but yet there is no one who is intirely deprived of them.

C H A P. XXXVII.

HERE begins the history of *Joseph*, one of the sons of *Jacob*. I. In this chapter we find *Joseph* dreaming dreams, which denoted the glory to which he should one day be exalted. II. We observe, that his brethren, moved with jealousy and hatred against him, intended to have murdered him; but sold him a slave into *Egypt*, and made their father *Jacob* believe that he had been devoured by wild beasts.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE history of *Joseph* is one of the finest and most remarkable in the holy scriptures, which affords us the clearest evidence of the providence of God, conducting all things with amazing and stupendous wisdom, and making *all things work together for good to those that love him*. In this chapter we are to observe, I. That God was pleased to reveal, by the dreams of *Joseph*, the glory to which he should be raised, a long time before it happened. II. We see, in the malice of *Joseph's* brethren against him, that virtue and innocence are often exposed to envy and jealousy, and that these passions lead men to commit very great crimes. III. The behaviour of *Joseph's* brethren, not only towards him, but their father also, upon whom they brought so great sorrow, proves that they were most of them extremely

wicked and unnatural ; as appears from several other places of this book. IV. Let it however be remarked, that God saved the life of *Joseph*, by *Reuben's* means, and was pleased to send some merchants thither, who carried *Joseph* into *Egypt*, where he was to be raised to great power. In this whole history, we are led to admire and adore the ways of providence, which, in a surprising manner, makes use of the wickedness of men to accomplish its designs. This may serve for a lesson of comfort to all those good people that are exposed to sufferings by the malice and injustice of men.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

MOSES relates, in this chapter, *Judab's* marriage, and his incest with *Thamar* his daughter-in-law.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we have more instances of the irregular conduct of *Jacob's* sons. The children of virtuous parents do not always inherit their piety ; and among those who know God, and live in covenant with him, there may be some very vicious, notwithstanding the advantages they enjoy. This history teaches us likewise, that sensuality and uncleanness draw men into great and enormous crimes ; and that God abhors all manner of impurity. We here also see, how apt wicked men and hypocrites are to condemn others with great severity, while they themselves are equally, if not more guilty. *Judab*, who ordered his daughter-in-law to be burnt, had defiled himself with an odious crime. However, the two children of *Thamar* are mentioned in the genealogy of our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, as may be seen in the first chapter of the gospel of *St Matthew*.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXXIX.

JOSEPH being in the service of *Potiphar*, God blessed him in such a manner, that his master made him steward over his house : but because he would not consent to the wicked desires of *Potiphar's* wife, she accused him, and he was thrown into prison, where God still took care of him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE see, that *Joseph* was no sooner arrived in *Egypt*, but by his wisdom and fidelity he gained the favour and confidence of his master, and experienced that blessing from God, which every where attends the virtuous. But he was likewise there exposed to a dangerous temptation, which, however, he resisted, through the fear he had of sinning against God. This example of *Joseph's* piety and chastity, ought to have great influence upon Christians to keep them from sin, and especially from uncleanness. We see, by what happened to *Joseph*, when accused by his master's wife and thrown into prison, that those who have cast off modesty are easily hurried to revenge, lying, and all manner of wickedness ; and that innocence is sometimes slandered and oppressed. But the kind treatment *Joseph* met with in prison, shews, that God is always with the righteous, and that he never forsakes them, even when they are persecuted unjustly.

C H A P. XL.

I. **J**OSEPH interprets the dreams of *Pharaoh's* two officers that were in prison with him : he foretels to one, that he should be restored to his employment ; and to the other, that he should be put

to death; and prays the former, to get him out of prison. II. What *Joseph* foretold came to pass; but that officer, who was released out of prison, forgot *Joseph*, so that he remained in prison two years longer.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter furnishes us with this general reflection: That the dreams of *Pharaoh's* two officers were sent by God, to serve afterwards to make *Joseph* known to *Pharaoh*, and to procure his release from prison; wherein we should admire the providence of God, who so ordered it, that he might bring about the deliverance and exaltation of his servant. The behaviour of the butler, who forgot *Joseph*, represents the usual conduct of those in prosperity; they forget those in misery, even though they owe them the greatest obligations. However, it must be observed too, that God would not deliver *Joseph* out of prison by means of this officer, but was pleased to try him yet two years longer, to deliver him afterwards in a more wonderful manner, and raise him to a greater degree of power than he would have attained if he had been set at liberty before. This shews, that *God's ways are not as our ways*; that he does not always make use of those methods for the deliverance of his children, which men judge most convenient; and if he be slow in coming to their assistance, it is because he will deliver them after a more signal manner.

C H A P. XLI.

I. *PHARAOH* has two dreams, which *Joseph* interprets; telling him, there would be seven years of plenty, and afterwards seven years of famine. II. He advises him to lay up the corn in the years

years of plenty, that the people might be provided when the famine came. III. *Pharaoh* makes *Joseph* governor of *Egypt*. IV. *Joseph* marries, and has two sons, *Manasses* and *Ephraim*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are two things chiefly to be observed in *Pharaoh's* dreams. I. The foreknowledge of God, and the care he took of the *Egyptians*, but especially of *Jacob's* family, for whose subsistence he was pleased to provide by *Joseph's* means. II. These dreams are to be looked upon as the means God made use of for *Joseph's* deliverance, and to make him known to *Pharaoh* by the interpretation of his dreams, and by his wife counsels; which, after his sufferings, soon raised him to the government of *Egypt*. Thus he attained the glory which had been formerly promised him; thus did God reward him for his virtue and innocence, which had been so long oppressed; and shewed, that he had tried him with so many adversities, only to render his virtue more pure, and bring him to greater prosperity afterwards. The marriage of *Joseph*, and the birth of his two sons, was, as he owned himself, and expressed by the names he gave them, another blessing from God, who caused him to find in a strange land, that rest and ease which he could not meet with in his father's house.

C H A P. XLIII.

I. **T**H E sons of *Jacob* coming into *Egypt* to buy corn, present themselves before *Joseph*, who knows them; but does not discover himself to them. II. He orders them to be put in prison, and keeps *Simcon* there, to oblige them to bring *Benjamin* to him. However, he sends them back with corn, and

causes their money to be put into their sacks ; and when they come to their father, they give him an account of what had happened to them in their journey.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS chapter presents us with three observations : I. That when *Joseph's* brethren came into *Egypt*, and did obeisance to him, his dreams were accomplished ; and that the reason why God had sent him thither, was for the support of *Jacob's* family, and to bring them into that country. II. *Joseph's* conduct towards his brethren, shews the affection he had for them, since he supplied them with as much corn as they wanted, and returned their money : we discover likewise in his behaviour a great deal of prudence, in concealing himself from them, and in detaining *Simeon*. This he did, not out of resentment against his brethren, but to engage them to return again, and to bring *Benjamin* with them, by that means to bring his father down ; and also because he had reason to mistrust them, and feared, that if he had told them who he was, they would have hid it from their father. III. What *Joseph's* brethren said one to another when they were put into prison, is very remarkable. Till then, they had not had so lively a sense of the heinousness of the sin they had committed against him twenty years before ; but the distress they were in, made them remember the anguish they had seen him in, and their inhuman treatment of him. The conscience of a sinner may be insensible for a time ; but sooner or later it will awake, especially in time of adversity, and strangely torment him with horror and remorse,

C H A P. XLIII.

I. **J**ACOB being forced by the famine to send his sons again into *Egypt*, consents that *Benjamin* should go with them. II. When they come into *Egypt*, they present themselves before *Joseph*, who received them very kindly, and made them eat with him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

JACOB's being forced to send his sons again into *Egypt*, must be considered as a new trial brought on him by God; in which appeared his tenderness for his children, and his faith and perseverance; above all, he gave a noble example of piety and resignation, recommending them to the divine protection, and submitting to be deprived of them, if God should think fit. Thus are we to submit to the dispensations of providence, and resign ourselves to all events. What *Joseph* said to his brethren when they came again into *Egypt*, and his manner of treating them, shewed his extreme tenderness for his father, and his brother *Benjamin*, and that he always loved his brethren, notwithstanding the injuries they had done him. This character of kindness and meekness is the sure mark of good men: they not only have the most tender affection for their relations, but are without resentment for the injuries they have received. and are always ready to do good to those that have offended them.

C H A P. XLIV.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. The direction that *Joseph* gave his steward upon the departure of his brethren, to put his cup into *Benjamin's*

min's sack, that he might have a pretence for stopping them. II. What *Judab* said to move *Joseph's* compassion, and engage him to detain him instead of *Benjamin*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

ANother method which *Joseph* wisely put in practice to try his brethren still further, before he made himself known to them, was stopping *Benjamin*, in order to discover their true sentiments, and make them more fully sensible of the sin they had committed against him. The tender and pathetic discourse of *Judab* is likewise very remarkable. It was a lively representation of the extreme anguish he and his brethren were in, and a sincere acknowledgment that God had justly punished them. Such is the effect of afflictions; which are very proper to awaken the conscience, and make men humble; and therefore God, in his great wisdom, makes use of them to bring men to the knowledge and sense of their sins.

C H A P. XLV.

I. **J**OSEPH makes himself known to his brethren, and orders them to fetch their father, and to bring him into *Egypt*. II. *Jacob* hearing that *Joseph* was yet alive, prepares himself to go down to him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT passed between *Joseph* and his brethren when he made himself known to them, is a very extraordinary instance of meekness and tenderness. His discourse and behaviour shew, that he had so far forgot what his brethren had done to him, that he not only forgave them, and forbore reproaches,

ed, but even comforted them, and begged them not to grieve for what they had done. II. We may here observe the piety of *Joseph*, who acknowledges, that all the evil his brethren had done to him, had been permitted and directed by God's providence, for the good of their families. We see, moreover, the care that *Joseph* took of his father, in providing for his journey and reception in *Egypt*. These are glorious examples of meekness, forgiveness, and piety, which every one ought to imitate. Lastly, We observe that *Jacob*, after he had lamented his son *Joseph* as dead, had the joy to hear that he was alive, and that he was ruler over the land of *Egypt*. Thus does God comfort his children, and give them a happy issue out of all their afflictions.

C H A P. XLVI.

MOSES relates in this chapter the journey of *Jacob*, with all his family, from the land of *Canaan* into *Egypt*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

OBserve in this chapter, that before *Jacob* set out for *Egypt*, God appeared to him, ordered him to go down, and promised to bless him in that country, and to bring back his posterity from thence. Since it pleased God the children of *Israel* should sojourn some time in *Egypt*, as he had before revealed to *Abraham*; this order was necessary, because otherwise, *Jacob's* going into *Egypt* might seem inconsistent with the promises of God to give him the land of *Canaan*. *Jacob* obeyed the divine command; which was a proof of his faith, as well as his submission to providence. The number of the children of *Jacob's* family, which consisted then but of seventy persons, shews how greatly his posterity was multiplied

plied in *Egypt*. In the interview between *Jacob* and *Joseph*, we may observe the respect that *Joseph* shewed his father, their mutual tenderness, and the joy and comfort which followed the afflictions to which they had been exposed.

C H A P. XLVII.

I. *JOSEPH* presents his brethren, and afterwards his father, to *Pharaoh*, who permits them to dwell in the land of *Goshen*. **II.** The famine still continuing, the *Egyptians* sell their cattle and their lands to *Pharaoh*. **III.** *Jacob*, perceiving his end approaching, makes *Joseph* promise to bury him in the land of *Canaan*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

H E R E we are to consider : **I.** *Pharaoh's* kind reception of *Jacob* and his family, which is a mark of the blessing that attended *Jacob*, and shews how God disposes and turns the hearts of kings in favour of those he loves. **II.** The method that *Joseph* observed in distributing the corn, during the famine, is a proof of his prudence, and likewise of his goodness and equity ; since he left them the produce of their lands, reserving only a fifth part for the king. However, this example does by no means countenance those who govern to trample upon the people, nor do any thing, especially in times of scarcity, which is contrary to the rules of justice and equity. **III.** *Jacob's* desire to be buried in the land of *Canaan*, is a remarkable proof of his faith in God, and that he died in full assurance that God would give that land to his posterity. Thus the faithful live and die, in a sure hope that God will not fail to accomplish, even after their death, the promises he has made them.

C H A P. XLVIII.

- I. **J**ACOB being upon his death-bed, blesses *Ephraim* and *Manasses*, the two sons of *Joseph*, preferring *Ephraim* the younger to *Manasses* the elder.
- II. He foretels, that God would deliver the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, and cause them to return into the land of *Canaan*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

JACOB's last words to *Joseph* are very edifying; and afford us a proof of his faith and fervent devotion, and his lively sense of all the favours he had received from the almighty, together with the greatest tenderness for *Joseph*. The desire *Jacob* had to bless the children of *Joseph*, and the excellent prayer with which he recommended them to God, shews, that he looked upon the blessing of heaven as the spring of all the happiness of his children; which is a noble example to dying persons, and especially to fathers of families when near their end. The preference that *Jacob* gave, by divine inspiration, to *Ephraim* the younger, before *Manasses* the elder, shews that God bestows his favours according to his own good pleasure, but always with wisdom, justice and mercy. This blessing of *Jacob* was fulfilled, when the tribe of *Ephraim* became afterwards so powerful, that it even gave name to one of the ten tribes of *Israel*.

C H A P. XLIX.

THIS chapter contains the last words of *Jacob*, in which he prophesies what should happen to his twelve sons, and their posterity. After that he renews the command he had given *Joseph* to bury him in the land of *Canaan*, and then dies.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are four things to be remarked in the last words of *Jacob*. I. His prayers in behalf of his children, and the blessings he bestows on them, are a proof of his tender affection towards them ; nevertheless, as a wise father, he reproaches some of them for the wicked actions they had been guilty of. II. This patriarch gives proof of his great piety towards God, and his sure hope in him at the approach of death. III. He foretels what was to happen afterwards to the twelve tribes ; but the most remarkable of these predictions relates to the tribe of *Judab* ; of which it is declared, that the scepter should not depart from it, till *Shiloh* came. This prophecy relates to the *Messiah*, and points out the time of his coming. Lastly, *Jacob's* renewing his charge to his sons to bury him in the land of *Canaan*, shews that he died in a firm belief that his posterity should possess that country, and that the promises of God should be surely accomplished.

C H A P. L.

MO S E S relates three things : I. *Joseph's* burying his father in the land of *Canaan*. II. His brethrens request to pardon what they had done against him formerly, and his answer. III. The death of *Joseph*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. TH E care *Joseph* took to bury *Jacob* in the land of *Canaan*, is a proof of his obedience to the will of his father, as well as of his piety and firm persuasion that the children of *Israel* should return thither. II. The earnest intreaty of his brethren to forgive them, shews, that the guilty are always

ways in fear, even long after the commission of their sin; and *Joseph's* kind reply to their request, presents us with a very extraordinary and affecting instance of piety, clemency, and meekness, which should make great impression on us. III. *Moses* informs us, in this chapter, that *Joseph* lived to a great and happy old age; that God made him live to see the prosperity of his family; and for some years of affliction which he had undergone in his youth, granted him a long and continued flow of prosperity. Thus we see how the Lord, after exercising his children with divers trials, grants them at last ease and tranquillity; and, at length, the blessing of a happy death, in expectation of that recompence of their faith and piety which he has reserved for them in the life to come. Lastly, It is proper in this place to call to mind the reflection *St Paul* makes on the death of *Joseph*, in the epistle to the *Hebrews*: That it was by faith *Joseph*, when he was dying, commanded his bones to be carried into the land of *Canaan*. This plainly proved, that he died in a firm persuasion that the children of *Israel* should leave the land of *Egypt*, and possess the country which God had promised to their fathers. Thus are the faithful supported by the promises of God, in life and in death.

The end of the first book of MOSES, called GENESIS.

THE
SECOND BOOK of MOSES,
CALLED
EXODUS.

ARGUMENT.

This book is called Exodus, which signifies, the going forth; because it begins with the history of the going forth of the children of Israel out of Egypt. It contains the history of what happened to the children of Israel, from the death of Joseph, to the making the tabernacle in the wilderness, and comprehends the space of about 140 years.

CHAP. I.

THE king of *Egypt* contrives to destroy the children of *Israel*, by using them with great severity; by commanding the midwives to kill all the male children of the *Hebrews* as soon as they were born; and lastly, by ordering them to be drowned in the river.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. **T**HE multiplying of the children of *Israel* in *Egypt*, and the barbarous methods made use of by *Pbaraob* to destroy them, fulfil what God had foretold the patriarchs, that their posterity should be extremely increased; that it should be afflicted in *Egypt*; and that afterwards he would bring them out from thence. II. We must likewise observe the wisdom and goodness of God, who blessed the children of *Israel* in *Egypt*; but as he would not have them continue there, suffered them to be thus persecuted, to the end they might be the more easily induced to leave that country. Thus God permits his children to be afflicted and persecuted in this world, to try them, and to make them leave it without regret. The refusal of the midwives to execute the cruel order of *Pbaraob*, and the reward that God gave them, shew that we must not obey the commands of princes when contrary to justice and conscience; and that God never fails to recompence the piety and zeal of those who obey him rather than men.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter contains, I. The birth of *Moses*, and the manner of his preservation from death, and being educated by *Pbaraob's* daughter. II. The concern he shewed for those of his nation, in slaying the *Egyptian*. III. His retreat into the land of *Midian*. IV. The death of the king of *Egypt*, and the deplorable condition of the people of *Israel* at that time.

REFLECTIONS.

WHEN we read in this chapter how *Moses* was, by a particular providence, preserved after his birth, nursed by his own mother, and brought up at court by the king's daughter; this event should lead us to admire the wonders of God's providence, who thus preserved *Moses* from death; and who so ordered it, that the exposing of the child should prove the means of his exaltation; and that he, who was one day to deliver the people of *Israel* from the tyranny of the *Egyptians*, should be brought up by the daughter of that very prince who had undertaken to destroy the *Israelites*. *Moses's* killing the *Egyptian*, is to be considered as an extraordinary action, by no means a precedent to us; since *Moses* was a man sent by God, and called to deliver his people out of *Egypt*. It may be too, that *Moses* had no other way of saving the life of the *Hebrew* that was smitten, or even his own life, but by killing the *Egyptian*. St *Paul's* remark on this passage is, *That by faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter: choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.* Lastly, When we consider how long and how severe this slavery of the *Israelites* was, we learn, that God is pleased sometimes to leave those he loves a great while exposed to sufferings, before he delivers them; but that neither the duration nor severity of their miseries should dishearten them.

C. H A P. III.

I. GOD appears to *Moses* in a bush which was in flames, without being consumed, and tells him, That he had chosen him to conduct his people

ple out of *Egypt*; and as *Moses* could not believe he would make use of him for this purpose, God assures him of his protection, and of his love to that people. II. He orders him to go and speak to the *Israelites*, and to *Pharaoh*, and foretels what will be the success of his commission.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to make the following reflections: The first, regards the manner of God's calling *Moses*, and revealing his design to make him the deliverer of his people *Israel*. By the miracle of the bush which *Moses* saw in flames without being consumed, God was pleased to engage his attention, and convince him that he was therein a peculiar manner present. After this God spake to *Moses*, and assured him, that the time was come in which he had determined to deliver his people from the tyranny of *Pharaoh*, and fulfil the promises he had before made to *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*. This might serve to confirm *Moses* in his mission, and convince the *Israelites* themselves that *Moses* was sent to them from God, and that the time of their deliverance was come. Hence we see, that God is always faithful to his covenant and promises; and that it is impossible he should ever forsake his church and his people. The second reflection relates to that reluctance which *Moses* expressed at going to *Pharaoh*, and his unwillingness to believe that God would deliver his people by his means. This reluctance in *Moses* must not be looked upon as an instance of disobedience, but rather as an effect of his humility, and a fear of not succeeding, and as one of those infirmities which may be found in those that fear God. However, what God said to *Moses*, and the promises he made him of his assistance, prove, that we ought to obey God in all his commands, and believe all his

promises, how difficult soever they may appear in the execution.

C H A P. IV.

I. **G**OD confirms *Moses* in his mission by two miraculous signs, and by repeated promises of his assistance. II. *Moses* sets out to go into *Egypt*, and an angel, who met him in the way, obliged him to circumcise his son. *Aaron* comes to meet him, and they two acquaint the children of *Israel*, that God intended to deliver them.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE chief observation upon this chapter relates to *Moses*, who several times refused to go and speak to the king of *Egypt*; from which, and from what God did to engage his obedience, we learn, that when God calls, it is our duty to obey the call, without fearing any thing, and without hearkning to the suggestions of the flesh, which are apt to turn us aside from our duty. The promises that God made to be with *Moses*, the signs by which he confirmed his promises, and the power he gave him to work miracles, intimate to us, that God always affords strength and means sufficient for the execution of his commands, and that he is always with his servants wherever he sends them. What happened to *Moses* in his return to *Egypt*, when God obliged him to circumcise his son, was a proof to him, that God intended circumcision, which was a token of his covenant with the children of *Israel*, should be observed. It is likewise a lesson to us, that the commands of God, even those which relate only to things external, and indifferent in their own nature, ought to be inviolably observed.

C H A P. V.

M O S E S and *Aaron* present themselves before *Pharaoh*, who would not hearken to them ; but, on the contrary, ordered the children of *Israel* to be treated with greater severity ; which made the *Israelites* murmur against *Moses*, and *Moses* himself complain to God of his ill success.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

T H E courage with which *Moses*, who at first made so many difficulties at going to speak to the king of *Egypt*, at length executed his commission, is a proof of his obedience and zeal, and an example to the servants of God to obey God, and not to be afraid of men. The haughty and impious answer of *Pharaoh* shews us, that he would never have let the children of *Israel* go, if God had not compelled him to it by his power. Thus the hardness of that prince's heart occasioned all the wonders which God wrought by the hands of *Moses*, and brought upon the *Egyptians* those sore calamities which they were visited with. *Pharaoh's* severe treatment of the people of *Israel*, was another trial that God brought upon *Moses* and the *Israelites*, to see whether they would always trust in his promises, notwithstanding the ill success of the first commission which he gave to *Moses*, so contrary to their expectations. This instructs us likewise, that when afflictions increase, they are nearer their end. Lastly, In the murmuring of the people against *Moses* and *Aaron*, one may observe the usual impatience and ingratitude of men. They distrust the promises of God, if he does not immediately fulfil them, and lose their courage at the very time that he is preparing to do them good, and giving them the strongest assurances of his love.

C H A P. VI.

I. **G**OD sends *Moses* a second time to the children of *Israel*, to assure them that he would deliver them; but they would not hear him. II. God commands him to go again with *Aaron* his brother, and speak to *Pharaoh*. III. The sacred historian adds the genealogy of *Moses* and *Aaron*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN the reading of this chapter, there are two things chiefly to be observed: I. That God gave the children of *Israel* fresh assurances of his assistance, notwithstanding their murmuring against *Moses*; whereby we see how gracious the Lord is, even to those that offend him, and make so ill a return for his favours. II. We see that the children of *Israel* refuse to hearken to *Moses*; because his first application to *Pharaoh*, had rendered their condition much more afflicting than it was before; and that *Moses* himself was afraid of returning to him, because of the difficulty of the undertaking. When men do not immediately see the effect of God's promises, and are exposed to sufferings, the greatness of their afflictions, and their own infirmities, tempt them to impatience, fear and distrust. But these temptations we should overcome, by considering that God never forsakes his people, and that the designs of his providence will infallibly be executed. The genealogy of *Moses* and *Aaron* is here set down, because they were persons of great consequence, and because afterwards the priests and other ministers of religion, were taken from their family.

C H A P. VII.

MOSES and *Aaron* return to *Pbaraob* ; and as he refused to let the children of *Israel* go, *Moses* turned his rod into a serpent before him ; and then he turned the waters into blood, which was the first of the ten plagues with which God smote *Egypt* ; but *Pbaraob*'s magicians counterfeiting these two miracles, he still persisted in his resolution.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

LET it be observed on this chapter, that when *Moses* began to do wonders, in order to convince *Pbaraob* of the power of God, and oblige him to obey his commands, this prince was not affected with them, because God permitted the magicians to imitate these wonders ; which they did, by imposing upon *Pbaraob* false and pretended miracles, which somewhat resembled those of *Moses* ; but were in fact nothing but contrivance and imposture. This was a means of hardening *Pbaraob*'s heart, though he might have discovered in the miracles of *Moses*, the difference between them and those of his magicians. God, for the trial of men, leaves them some appearance of pretence for hardening themselves ; however, he always allows them sufficient means to distinguish truth from falsehood, and to know their duty.

C H A P. VIII.

MOSES smites *Egypt* with a second plague, which was that of frogs ; and with the third, which was that of lice ; which the magicians could not imitate ; and the fourth, was the swarm of insects.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are to consider here, I. That the first plagues with which God smote the *Egyptians* were very light; but that he sent new ones, more severe, to overcome the obstinacy of *Pbaraob*. II. That these plagues ought to have had the greater effect upon him, as the magicians, who had at first imitated some of *Moses's* miracles, could not imitate the last, and acknowledged the almighty power of God in them; and as the king himself was forced to have recourse to the intercession of *Moses* and *Aaron* to remove them. III. We see that notwithstanding all this, *Pbaraob* persisted in his resolution, and refused to let the *Israelites* go. All this proves; that God was not the author of this king's obduracy; that on the contrary he did all that was necessary to prevail upon him; and therefore, that it was *Pbaraob* who hardened his own heart, as is declared several times in this chapter, and in the sequel of this history. Herein we may discover, on one hand; the goodness and patience of God, who chastises sinners to cure their hardness of heart, but defers their destruction a long time: on the other hand, we see how obstinate and incorrigible some men are, who will not make a good use either of the chastisements or long-suffering of the Lord. Let us also observe how God spared the *Israelites*, at the same time that he punished the *Egyptians*. This was another miracle, which ought to have convinced *Pbaraob* and his subjects; and thus does God give proofs of his favour to his children, whilst he pours out his wrath upon the wicked.

C H A P. IX.

THIS chapter contains an account of the fifth plague of *Egypt*, which was the mortality among the cattle; of the biles and blains, which was the sixth; and of the storms of hail and thunder, which was the seventh.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we observe, first, that the more *Pharaoh* hardened his heart, and refused to let the *Israelites* go, the greater were *Moses's* threatnings, and the plagues more severe and terrible; and that God, who could have destroyed this prince and all his land at once and in a moment, punished them by little and little, to make his power, goodness, and justice known, and to render his name famous throughout all the earth. God, who is just and good, is long-suffering, and punishes men by degrees, and does not at first inflict the heaviest chastisements. We have here new and more convincing proofs of the prodigious hardness of *Pharaoh's* heart, and his exceeding wickedness; who, when he was pursued by the divine corrections, acknowledged his guilt, and promised to let the people go, if *Moses* would remove the plagues; but as soon as he was delivered from them, refused to keep his word. Such is the character of the wicked. They seem to be softened when God afflicts them, and make great promises of amendment; but fall again into their hardness and impenitence, and break their vows, as soon as the affliction is over, and they have a little respite. This is a very important lesson, which all of us ought to make a good use of.

C H A P . X .

I. **M** O S E S smites *Egypt* with the locusts, which was the eighth plague. II. After this God sends the ninth plague, which was that of darkness; which so terrified *Pharaoh*, that he consented the *Israelites* should depart, provided they left their cattle behind them; but *Moses* refusing to accept of these terms, *Pharaoh* forbids him any more to come into his presence,

R E F L E C T I O N S .

T H E most remarkable circumstance in this chapter, besides what has been observed on the foregoing, is, that *Pharaoh*, terrified by the judgments of God, and importuned by his own subjects to let the children of *Israel* go, consented to let one part of the people go; but would not suffer them to take their cattle with them; which brought upon him the last and most dreadful of all the plagues. The behaviour of this prince is very like those sinners, who, instead of yielding to, and obeying without reserve whatever is commanded by God, will only pay a partial obedience, and cannot resolve with themselves entirely to renounce all their passions and interests. We see here likewise to what a degree *Pharaoh* hardened himself; since neither the goodness of God, nor his judgments, could tame him; and that though he promised *Moses* he would no longer withstand God, if he delivered him from these plagues, he forgot all his promises as soon as the plagues ceased; and even went so far as to threaten to put *Moses* to death. Nothing can prevail upon men who are arrived to a certain degree of blindness and wickedness: even if they appear affected and humbled in distress, they return to their first sentiments,

ments, as soon as it is over ; thus do obstinate sinners run headlong to their own destruction, and strengthen themselves more and more in their wickedness. This ought to inspire us, with a holy dread of falling into the like obduracy and impenitence.

C H A P. XI.

GOD acquaints *Moses*, that he was going to send the tenth, and last plague upon *Egypt*, which would be the death of the first-born ; and that after that the people of *Israel* should go out freely ; and commands the *Israelites* to borrow of the *Egyptians* vessels of gold and silver, and carry them away with them.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE first reflection to be made here for our instruction is, that the *Israelites* might justly carry away with them, the gold and silver vessels of the *Egyptians*, because they did it by the order of God, who is the absolute Lord of all things, and bestows the things of this world on whom he pleases ; and on this occasion thought fit to make up to the *Israelites* the losses they had sustained by the injustice of the *Egyptians*. II. We must remember, what has been already observed, that *Pharaoh's* obstinacy and hardness of heart, ought to be attributed to nothing but his own desperate wickedness ; and though it be often said in this history, that God hardened *Pharaoh's* heart, it must not be understood, as if God was the author of his obstinacy : it denotes only that God certainly knew that he would harden himself, that God would permit him so to do, and that he would even do some things, which that prince would abuse, and take occasion from them to harden himself still the more. God wisely, and justly permits sinners to harden

harden themselves, and to have an opportunity of confirming themselves in their wickedness; yet he is by no means the cause of sin and impenitence; their destruction is entirely owing to themselves and not to God; who, far from being the cause of it, does all that is necessary to keep them from falling into it.

C H A P. XII. 1—28.

TH E first part of this chapter contains the institution of the passover.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E first thing to be observed on this chapter is, that the institution of the passover is set down exactly by *Moses*, because this ceremony was one of the most considerable in the *Jewish* religion. II. That when God was ready to deliver his people out of *Egypt*, he ordered them to sacrifice in every family a lamb, to eat it, and to sprinkle their houses with the blood; that the angel who was to destroy the first-born of *Egypt* might spare the families of the *Israelites*. By this ceremony, and by the solemn sacrifice of the passover, God designed to convince the children of *Israel*, that the gods of the *Egyptians* were but idols; that he was the true God, and by his power and mercy was going to deliver them. To preserve the memory of this great event, God commanded them to keep the passover every year, by sacrificing a lamb. He ordered them also to eat unleavened bread at the feast of the passover, because they came out of *Egypt* in such haste, that they were forced to bake their dough before it was leavened. This history is remarkable in itself; but still more so, as it is a clear and express type of that great deliverance which God has vouchsafed us by our Lord
Jesus

Jesus Christ, who is the true lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world; our real passover, that was sacrificed for us.

C H A P. XII. 29—51.

MOSES gives us the history of the death of the first-born of the *Egyptians*, and of the children of *Israel* going out of *Egypt*; with a repetition of the law of the passover.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE may learn from this history, that God at last subdued the haughtiness of *Pharaoh*, and constrained him to let the children of *Israel* go; that they had full liberty to depart, and went out with great riches. This memorable event proves that nothing can withstand the infinite power of God: it proves likewise the love of God to his people, and the truth of those promises which he had made of delivering them from the slavery under which they had so long groaned. We see likewise, that he was pleased the memory of so wonderful a deliverance should be preserved by the feast of passover; and that he gave an express law, binding all the *Israelites*, upon pain of death, to solemnize this sacrament every year. This shews, that we are indispensably obliged to observe the divine instructions; and above all, that we should never forget God's favours towards us; but especially what *Jesus Christ* has done to save us; and that Christians in particular are under the strictest obligation to celebrate with true devotion that holy supper, which our Lord himself appointed for a memorial of his death.

C H A P. XIII.

I. **M** O S E S repeats the law for the observation of the passover, and commands them to consecrate their first-born. II. He afterwards acquaints us, that God thought fit the children of *Israel* should take the way of the wilderness, when they were got out of *Egypt*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

G O D's design in commanding the people of *Israel* to celebrate the passover every year, was to perpetuate among them the remembrance of their departure out of *Egypt*; and that other law which required them to dedicate to God all their first-born, was appointed in order to remind their posterity, that God had spared their first-born, when he destroyed those of the *Egyptians*. Hence we should learn never to forget the mercies of God, and to testify our gratitude by devoting to him our persons, and all that is most near and dear to us. The express command of God to the *Israelites*, to inform their children of that wonderful deliverance from the *Egyptian* bondage, which he had vouchsafed to their nation, is a clear proof, that it is the duty of parents to train up their children in the knowledge and fear of God; but above all, that they ought to be particularly careful to instruct them in the wonderful work of man's redemption by *Jesus Christ*. It is observed in this chapter, that God would not have the *Israelites* go into the land of *Canaan* the shortest way; but made them go by the way of the red sea, and of the wilderness; because this people, who were not yet trained to war, were very unfit to fight with the *Canaanites*; and because God intended to work new wonders for them in the red sea and in the wilderness, by leading them

them through the sea on dry ground, by drowning *Pharaoh* in it, and by feeding them in a miraculous manner in the wilderness. Lastly, The manner of God's conducting the *Israelites* by a pillar of a cloud and of fire, is a proof of the great power of God, and of his care and protection of his children.

C H A P. XIV.

PHARAOH resolving to pursue the children of *Israel*, is drowned, with all his army, in the red sea, which the *Israelites* had passed over on dry ground.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we observe, I. That God, by leading the *Israelites* to the shore of the red sea, and suffering *Pharaoh* to overtake them with his army, exposed them to great danger, and that they were extremely alarmed and terrified at it. But God thus dealt with them that his power might appear with greater lustre, in their miraculous deliverance when they passed through the sea on foot, and in the utter destruction of *Pharaoh*, who with all his army perished in the waters. II. This history represents the blindness and surprising obstinacy of the king of *Egypt*, who, after all the plagues with which God had smote him, obstinately pursued the people of *Israel*, and even dared to go into the red sea after them. In this history we are to observe very attentively, on one hand, what obstinate sinners are capable of, and with what blindness and fury they hasten to their own ruin; and on the other hand, the mighty power of God displayed in the deliverance of his children; and the destruction of his enemies.

C H A P. XV.

TWO things are related in this chapter, I. The song of the *Israelites*, upon *Pharaoh's* being drowned. II. Their murmuring against *Moses*, because they met with no water in the desert, and because the waters of *Mara* were bitter; and the miracle that *Moses* wrought on this occasion.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE song which *Moses*, and *Miriam* his sister, and the children of *Israel* sung, after *Pharaoh* and his army were drowned in the red sea, is the most ancient hymn we read of in history. In it we have the strongest expressions of joy, and of gratitude towards God; herein they celebrate that almighty power, which had been so gloriously displayed in their deliverance; and profess their belief that God would put them in possession of the land of *Canaan*; and that the inhabitants of that country, terrified and astonished, would not be able to resist them. Thus should we, and with still greater zeal, praise the Lord for his favours, and chiefly for his mercy and power, manifested in the work of our redemption by our Lord *Jesus Christ*. We have seen, in the next place, that God had no sooner vouchsafed the *Israelites* so great a deliverance, but they immediately began to murmur against him, and distrust his providence, because they wanted water; and then because the waters he gave them were bitter: however, God was so gracious as to work a new miracle for them, and make those waters sweet. Such is the infidelity and ingratitude of men, who can so soon forget the divine blessings, and so easily fall into impatience: but the Lord is long-suffering towards them, and still

still gives them fresh proofs of his love, and grants them favours which they are unworthy of.

C H A P. XVI.

THE *Israelites* murmuring against *Moses*, because they had nothing to eat ; God sends them quails, and manna, which was their food in the wilderness for the space of forty years.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HIS history affords another proof of the ingratitude of the children of *Israel*, who, after they had so many times experienced the divine power and protection, were always murmuring against *Moses*, and longing after *Egypt*, from whence they came. Observe however the goodness of God, who was pleased to put a stop to those murmurings, and provide food for them, sending them manna, which was their food the forty years they were in the wilderness. II. It is to be remarked, that the manna fell every morning, except on the sabbath day ; and that it stank if they gathered more than was sufficient for one day. These were so many miracles, to convince the *Israelites* that it was God who fed them in this miraculous manner. Lastly, This history should remind us of what *Jesus Christ* tells us in the gospel, *John* vi. that the children of *Israel* did not eat the true bread from heaven ; that the manna which they did eat in the wilderness could not preserve them from death ; whereas in *Jesus Christ* we have that true bread that came down from heaven, which gives us everlasting life. Let us beseech him to give us always this heavenly food, whilst we are in the wilderness of this world ; and when he gives it to us, let us make a better use of it, than the *Jews* did formerly of the manna that

God gave them, and of all the other mercies they received from the divine bounty in the wilderness.

C H A P. XVII.

THIS chapter has two parts : in the first, *Moses* relates the miracle of the water, which God made to spring out of the rock, to stop the murmuring of the people : and in the second, the victory obtained by the children of *Israel* over the *Amalekites*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE miracle wrought by *Moses* in bringing water out of the rock, to allay the thirst and stop the murmurings of the *Israelites*, leads us to reflect upon the incredulity of that people, who were always distrusting the power of God, and so often rebelling against *Moses* ; as well as to consider the great patience of the Lord, in working this new miracle for them. The victory over the *Amalekites* is an instance of the just punishment of God, inflicted on the enemies of his people ; but we must particularly take notice, that God granted this victory to the prayers of *Moses*, that the *Israelites* might know God was the author and giver of it. By this example we learn, that calling upon the name of God, and perseverance in prayer, is the most effectual way to obtain his assistance, and to triumph over all our enemies, both spiritual and temporal.

C H A P. XVIII.

JETHRO, the father-in-law of *Moses*, brings him his wife and his two sons, and advises him
to

to appoint judges and officers for the government of the people of *Israel*; which *Moses* did.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **JETHRO**, the father-in-law of *Moses*, came to see him, not only to bring him his wife and children, but chiefly to rejoice with him, and with all the people, upon God's delivering them from the bondage of *Egypt*. This example of *Jethro's* zeal, piety and charity, should excite us to share in the happiness of our brethren; and especially to rejoice when the glory of God is promoted, and his power and justice manifested to all the world. II. What is said in this chapter concerning the appointment of judges and magistrates, and the qualities they ought to have, teaches us, that those who are in civil employments ought to discharge them with diligence and integrity; that they should be persons fearing God, virtuous, just, and above all, disinterested, and not fond of filthy lucre. This too should convince us of the absolute necessity of magistrates for the well ordering of society; that they are of divine appointment, and that every one ought to submit to them and their authority.

C H A P. XIX.

I. **T**H E people of *Israel* coming to the wilderness of *Sinai*, *Moses* acquaints them, that God intended to make a covenant with them, and orders them to sanctify themselves, and be prepared to hear the promulgation of the law. II. Three days after, God comes down upon mount *Sinai* with the marks of his power and majesty.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT is chiefly to be observed in this chapter is, that as soon as God had delivered his people out of *Egypt*, he gave them the law : a plain proof, that his design of making choice of this people, and separating them from other nations, was to establish pure religion among them, and engage them to fear him. This is the end he has always had in view ; and he has redeemed and chosen us for his people, for no other end but that we might serve him in holiness and righteousness. God required the *Jews* to prepare and sanctify themselves, before they heard the publication of the law, to teach them that this law was given unto men only for their sanctification. The manner in which it was published, and the dreadful and majestic apparatus to the Lord's descending on mount *Sinai*, was designed to convince them that it was God who spake to them, to inspire them with fear, and teach them and all mankind that those that shall break these laws shall not escape his vengeance.

C H A P. XX.

IN this chapter we see, I. The publication of the ten commandments of the law. II. The terror that seized the *Israelites* when they heard the voice of God. III. God forbids the making of idols, and prescribes the manner of building their altars.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THERE are two things in this chapter which chiefly demand our attention ; namely, the law itself which was published, and the terror which seized the *Israelites* at the time of its promulgation.

On

On the law itself we are to consider, I. The dignity and authority of it; since it was published by God himself, and attended with such transcendent marks of his power. II. That this law concerns us as well as the *Jews*, since it contains nothing but what is perfectly just; and our Saviour himself has told us that he came not to abolish the law, but, rather, to lay us under a stricter obligation to fulfil it. III. We must remember that this law does not only forbid those sins which are therein particularly mentioned; but that it regulates our thoughts and desires, as well as our actions; and that God will judge us all by this law, as it is explained in the gospel. The exceeding great dread that came upon the *Israelites* when God published his law, should put us in mind of what *St. Paul* says on this subject in the epistle to the *Hebrews*: that *we are not come unto mount Sinai, nor have heard that terrible voice, which made the Jews intreat that the word should not be spoken to them any more: but that we are come unto mount Sion, and have heard the voice of Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant; that if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven; that our God is a consuming fire; and that therefore, we ought to serve him with reverence and godly fear, so that we may be accepted by him.* The laws set down at the end of this chapter, concerning idols and altars, tended to keep the children of *Israel* at a distance from idolatry; to prevent religion from being altered, and make the divine service be performed with decency.

C H A P. XXI. 1,—17.

THIS chapter and the following contain sundry laws that God gave *Moses* upon mount *Sinai*, to be delivered by him to the people of *Israel*; most of which are political. Those contained in the former part of this chapter concern the right which masters had over their slaves, the punishment of murderers, of parricides, of men-stealers, and of those that curse father or mother.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE political laws that God gave the *Jews* are worthy the serious attention, not only of judges and magistrates, that they may conform to them as much as possible, in all things that are not peculiar to the *Israelites*, to the land of *Canaan*, and to those times, but of every other person; as they contain very excellent precepts of justice, and charity, and many other duties. Upon the laws concerning slaves, it must be observed, that slavery is abolished among Christians; and therefore that these laws do not respect us directly. However, we may conclude from them, that the will of God is, that servants should be faithful to their masters, and that masters should treat their servants with tenderness and humanity. We learn likewise in this chapter, that murderers, men-stealers, and those that curse father or mother, are guilty of very enormous crimes, which the magistrate ought to punish severely; and we may judge from thence, that God will not leave them unpunished. These are crimes, which ought not to be so much as known among Christians, no more than several others mentioned in the laws of *Moses*.

C H A P. XXI. 18, — 36.

GOD prescribes laws to be observed with respect to those that smote or wounded any one, even their own slaves, or whose cattle did any damage.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

FROM the reading of this chapter we learn,
 I. That those who smite or wound their neighbours, ought not to go unpunished. II. That those who occasion any evil to their neighbour, whether wilfully or accidentally and without any evil intention, should suffer for it, and ought to repair the damage as much as may be. III. That although slavery obtained among the *Jews*, God did not intend they should treat their slaves cruelly and inhumanly, as other nations did; from whence it appears, that Christians should behave with still greater meekness and gentleness towards their servants. Lastly, It must be observed that these words, *an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*, do not authorize private revenge, but only denote the punishment that judges were to inflict upon such as assaulted and wounded their neighbour; otherwise, we should be so far from returning evil for evil, that we ought, as Christ observes in the fifth chapter of *St Matthew*, where this law is mentioned, to bear injuries patiently; not to avenge ourselves, nor always insist upon what is strictly our right, but to imitate that meekness and patience which *Jesus Christ* our Redeemer has given us an example of.

C H A P. XXII.

THIS chapter mentions the punishment of those that steal or destroy their neighbour's goods, and their obligation to make restitution: to which are added several other laws concerning goods that have been pledged or lent; concerning impurity, idolatry, oppression, usury, the respect due to magistrates, and the first fruits, which the *Jews* were to offer to God.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we have several instructions. The first, (which is repeated several times) is, that they who have wronged their neighbour in any manner, either by theft, cheating, or even unwittingly and imprudently, are obliged to make restitution; and that things that have been intrusted with or lent to any one, should be faithfully returned. II. We see likewise here that an oath may be taken to put an end to disputes; that oaths should be had in reverence; that the sin of uncleanness should as much as possible be remedied by marriage, and that God would have idolators put to death as well as witches and enchanters, and other persons who used unlawful arts. III. God declares in the most express manner, that it is a great crime to oppress the fatherless, the widows and the strangers, and rigorously to exact the payment of a debt from the poor and needy; that these are sins which cry to God for vengeance, and provoke his wrath. IV. Here likewise we learn to speak always of magistrates with reverence and respect. Lastly, The obligation laid upon the *Jews* to offer their first fruits to God, shews that religion lays us under an obligation to devote some part of those good

good things which God hath given us, to works of piety and charity.

C H A P. XXIII.

THE laws here prescribed relate, I. To slander, equity, humanity, and justice. II. They concern the duty of judges. III. The observation of the sabbath, and of the sabbatical year; and of the three great feasts of the *Jews*, which were the pass-over, pentecost, and the feast of tabernacles. IV. God promises to send his angel to conduct the people into the land of *Canaan*, and orders them to destroy the *Canaanites*, not all at once, but by little and little; forbidding the people to imitate, or even tolerate in any degree, the idolatry of the *Canaanites*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we find the following instructions. I. That it is our duty to avoid slander and evil speaking. II. That judges ought to administer justice with uprightness and integrity, without respect of persons, and especially without taking any bribe. III. That the *Jews* were to keep holy the sabbath-day, and moreover to let the land rest every seventh year; which was designed to teach them to trust in God's providence, and to be charitable to the poor; which is our duty as well as theirs. IV. As the three solemn feasts of the *Israelites* were appointed in order to preserve among them the remembrance of those signal favours which God had conferred on their nation; it is meet and right that Christians also should discharge the duties of gratitude and thankfulness, especially for the mercies they receive in *Jesus Christ*. V. The law which forbids the seething the kid in his mother's milk was given in opposition

sition to a superstitious and idolatrous custom among the neighbouring nations, who practised this ceremony when they were gathering their fruits; for which reason this prohibition is joined with the law concerning the first fruits. VI. The promise which God made of sending his angel to conduct the *Jews* into the land of *Canaan*, and the command he gave them to hearken to the voice of that angel, and not to provoke him, should be a warning to us, not to provoke the Lord by our disobedience, who is in the midst of us, but to reverence him, and obey his voice. Lastly, We have here an instance of the goodness and wisdom of God, who, introducing the children of *Israel* into the land of *Canaan*, sent a terror upon the *Canaanites*, but did not however destroy them all at once, lest, the country being depopulated the wild beasts should increase upon them. This was a very convincing proof of his care over them; and a powerful motive to flee from idolatry, and inviolably adhere to the service of the true God.

C H A P. XXIV.

I. **M**OSES makes a covenant with the people of *Israel*, and solemnly engages them to observe the laws of God. II. Afterwards he goes up to mount *Sinai*, where he remained forty days and forty nights, without either eating or drinking, as we are told in the thirty fourth chapter of this book. During which time God gave him the model of the tabernacle which was to be prepared, and of all its parts.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE vow which *Moses* engaged the people to make, that they would keep the law of God,
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and the great solemnity with which this vow was attended, and the covenant between God and the people confirmed, lead us to consider, that since God has chosen us to be his people, and has made known his will to us, we are indispensibly bound to keep his laws, as we have likewise solemnly engaged to do. This St Paul teaches us in the epistle to the Hebrews, where he says, *That when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the blood of the victims, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God has made with you;* but that Jesus Christ has confirmed the new covenant, *not with the blood of calves, and goats, but by his own blood, having offered himself up to God a sacrifice without spot or blemish, that he might purify our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God.* From whence we may conclude, that our covenant with God is still more holy, than that made with the Israelites by the mediation of Moses, and that those who shall violate it have reason to expect the most severe punishment. *Moses's* abode on mount Sinai forty days, his miraculous fast all that time, and the cloud covering the mountain, as a token of the divine presence, in the sight of the elders and all the people, prove the divine legation of *Moses*, and the authority of his law. As *Moses* fasted, so did our Lord Jesus Christ fast forty days in the wilderness, before he entered upon his ministry.

C H A P. XXV.

GOD commands *Moses* to exhort the people to contribute to the building of the tabernacle, and gives the model of the ark, and of the mercy-seat which covered the ark; of the table, whereon
was

was to be laid what they called the shew-bread, and of the candlestick.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **O**N this and the following chapters we must observe in general, that God prescribed to the *Israelites* a form of worship, which it was not lawful for them to depart from, and so ordered all the circumstances of it, that no innovation or alteration could be made in it. This was necessary to keep that people attached to the worship of the true God, and at a distance from false and idolatrous worship, which they would have easily fallen into, if they had been left at liberty to perform divine service as they had thought proper. II. The form of worship appointed by God made a fine appearance, and was attended with many pompous ceremonies; in which God condescended to the notions and sentiments of the children of *Israel*, who were a rude and unrefined people, whose inclinations would have led them to worship the deity after the manner of other nations, and who would not have been contented with a worship attended with nothing but plainness and simplicity. III. God thought fit there should be a tabernacle made, which was a kind of tent where divine service was performed, where the people assembled for acts of religion, and where God exhibited the tokens of his presence. He gave an exact model of the ark, of the table, of the candlestick, and of every thing in and about the tabernacle. Lastly, We are to consider that these things were appointed as proper for those times, and that they served for an example and shadow of heavenly things. This is the reflection which *St Paul* makes in the epistle to the *Hebrews* on the last words of this chapter, *Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.*

C H A P. XXVI.

IN this chapter we have a description, I. Of the curtains, of the hangings, and covering of the tabernacle. II. Of the boards, sockets and bars, which served to carry the tabernacle. III. Of the vail which divided the holy place, where was the altar of incense, the table and the candlestick, from the most holy place, where the ark was set. IV. Of the hanging which was at the entrance of the tabernacle.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN the reflections on the preceding chapter, a reason was assigned why God gave such express command concerning the form of the tabernacle and all its parts; and why he ordered it to be built with the several ornaments, and with that magnificence observable in it. We are to observe in this chapter, I. That as the tabernacle was to be often removed from place to place, especially while the *Israelites* sojourn'd in the wilderness, it was made in such a manner as to be easily taken to pieces and put together again. II. That the service which was performed in the tabernacle, and continued in the temple of *Jerusalem*, was to last no longer than till the coming of *Jesus Christ*. This appeared by the rending of the vail, which was at the entrance of the most holy place, at the time of our Lord's crucifixion; which, as *St Paul* speaks, signified, that the way into the holy place was not made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing; that the legal worship was drawing to an end, and that the entrance into the heavenly sanctuary would be from thenceforth open unto men through *Jesus Christ*.

C H A P. XXVII.

THIS chapter contains directions concerning the altar of burnt-offerings, the court of the tabernacle, and the lamps that were to be burning in the tabernacle all night.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE altar of burnt-offerings was placed before the door of the tabernacle; and on this altar they offered the whole burnt-offerings, that is, those sacrifices that were made by fire, and wholly consumed. The court before the tabernacle was a large court where the priests and Levites officiated, and where the people assembled for divine service. The law concerning the lamps which were to burn in the tabernacle in the night was appointed because God was pleased to have that holy place enlightened in darkness, to prevent any inconvenience that might have happened; and that his ministers might attend there and praise him continually.

C H A P. XXVIII.

AARON and his sons are chosen by God to exercise the priest's office; *Aaron's* dress when he was to perform divine service is appointed, and the vestments of the other priests are regulated.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE laws relating to the holy vestments were designed to inspire the people of *Israel* with respect for the divine service, and to render the ministers of religion venerable. God intended likewise by this means to engage the priests themselves to reverence the character they were invested with.

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This was in particular the design of these words graven upon a plate of gold fastened to the mitre of the high-priest, **HOLINESS TO THE LORD.** It is the will of God that religion be respected, that those who minister about holy things be had in reverence, and that they endeavour to recommend themselves in the sight of God and man by the decency and gravity of their behaviour, by the holiness of their lives, and by the faithful discharge of the duties of their function. This is particularly required of the ministers of the new covenant, whose office is still more holy than that of the priests under the old testament.

C H A P. XXIX.

I. **G**OD prescribes the manner of consecrating and appointing *Aaron* and the other priests to their office, and assigns them a portion in the sacrifices. II. He commands the continual sacrifice, which was to be offered every morning and every evening; and promises the *Israelites* to be with them and dwell amongst them.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE solemn rites and ceremonies which, by God's command, were practised when *Aaron* and his sons were consecrated and set apart to their office, tended to convince the people that they were God's ministers, and that their functions were all holy. God has given laws still more important, and not less express, concerning the calling of pastors and teachers in the Christian church, which laws ought to be inviolably observed. II. The law concerning the morning and evening sacrifice is founded on the obligation all men are under to serve God continually; and in particular, of offering him at
the

the beginning and end of every day, the sacrifice of their prayers and praises. III. If God promised the *Israelites* to dwell amongst them, we cannot doubt but he is in a more intimate manner present to defend and protect the Christian church. This *St Paul* proves, when he applies the promise in this chapter to christians, *I will dwell amongst them, and will be their God*; and when he exhorts them, from this very consideration, to *cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*.

C H A P. XXX.

I. **G** O D gives *Moses* a model of the altar of incense, and directions for the use of it. II. He commands all the *Israelites* from twenty years old to pay half a shekel for the uses of the tabernacle. III. He gives orders for the making a large laver of brass, where the priests were to wash their hands and feet, before they performed divine service. IV. He gives directions for making the holy oil to anoint the priests, and the tabernacle, and all things in it; and for making the holy perfume.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T** H E altar of incense was set in the holy place before the vail: on this altar they burnt incense morning and evening; and once in a year, which was on the day of atonement, the high-priest made propitiation for the people with the blood of the victim, poured on the horns of this altar. II. The half shekel which all the *Israelites*, rich and poor, were to pay, was a tribute and homage paid to God, and served to put them in mind of their dependence upon him. This money was appointed to supply the necessary expences of the tabernacle. And
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Christians are not less obliged to acknowledge their dependance on God for all that they possess. III. God commanded the priests to wash themselves before they performed any of their ministerial functions, to teach them and all the people to present themselves before the Lord with purity of heart. IV. The strict charge not to employ the holy oil and perfume to any other uses than those prescribed in the law, tended to inspire men with greater reverence for religion, and things set apart for divine service.

C H A P. XXXI.

I. **G** O D names the artificers that were to labour in the works of the tabernacle. II. He repeats the law for the observation of the sabbath. III. He gives *Moses* the two tables of the law.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

T H E R E are four reflections to be made on this chapter, I. That God did not leave it to the people to make choice of persons to work in the tabernacle, but named those who were to have the principal direction of this work, that it might appear that every thing relating to the divine service was done by his order and authority. II. We find by this and the following chapters, that though the children of *Israel* had been in a state of oppression in *Egypt*, there were nevertheless among them some persons of both sexes who had ingenuity and capacity for all kinds of workmanship. III. God on this occasion repeated the law concerning the observation of the sabbath, lest those who were to work in the tabernacle might imagine themselves at liberty not to rest on that day. And the frequent repetitions of this law, as well as the punishment of death

denounced against the transgressors of it, prove the great importance of it. The constant observance of this day of rest, served to remind the *Jews* that they were worshippers of the true God, and to keep them from falling into idolatry. IV. After God had pronounced the law from mount *Sinai*, he was pleased to engrave it upon tables of stone, that it might be preserved to future ages without alteration. It has always been the will of God that men should adhere to his word, and to the revelation he has made of his will, without adding to it, or diminishing from it, or making the least alteration; and that they should make it the unalterable rule of their faith and practice.

C H A P. XXXII.

WE have here the history of the *Israelites* idolatrous worship of the golden calf, and the manner in which *Moses* punished them for that sin.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

HERE we are to consider, I. The great sin of the *Israelites*; who, notwithstanding the many warnings God had given them to avoid idolatry, and the solemn promises they had lately made in the covenant *Moses* had entered into with them, made a golden calf and worshipped it, in imitation of the idolatry of the *Egyptians*. And let it be remarked, that though they pretended to worship the true God under the similitude of a golden calf, they were nevertheless guilty of real idolatry, this being expressly forbidden in the law; which shews, that it is absolutely unlawful to worship any image, and that those things which God has forbid cannot be rendered lawful by the intention. II. We may likewise learn from the weakness of *Aaron*, who, instead of oppos-

ing this idolatry, consented to it, that timorousness and compliance, especially in persons of a public character, are often attended with very fatal consequences, and that they become exceeding guilty before God, in not resolutely and manfully opposing wickedness and vice. III. The great charity of *Moses*, who interceded with so much zeal for the children of *Israel*, should serve as a motive to all good men, particularly God's ministers, to intercede and pray for sinners; and the regard God had to the intercession of *Moses*, shews, that the prayer of the righteous availeth much with God. IV. The manner in which the Levites punished the idolatry of the people, must be acknowledged to be very just, though it was severe, God having expressly ordered to put those to death that were guilty of idolatry. Lastly, When we read this history we should call to mind what *St Paul* says, *1 Cor. x.* That these things are our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as did the *Israelites*; and that we should not imitate them in their idolatry, their lewdness and disobedience.

C H A P. XXXIII.

FOUR things are here mentioned: I. The humiliation of the *Israelites*, after their idolatry in worshipping the golden calf.* II. The manner of erecting the tabernacle, which was the place where the people assembled to hear the will of God, without the camp; and how God there spake to *Moses*. III. *Moses* again intercedes with God to pardon the *Israelites*, and to be ever with them. IV. He requests of God to shew him his glory.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE example of the *Israelites*, who adorned themselves with ornaments, after they had

been punished for their idolatry, teaches us to humble ourselves when we have offended God, and to give all possible proofs of our contrition when God is angry with us. II. The manner in which God spake, and communicated himself to *Moses*, shews that he was a very great prophet, and that his laws and his doctrine came from God, and consequently, that they ought to be considered by us with great respect. III. In the prayers that *Moses* continued to offer up in behalf of the *Israelites*, we ought to observe the extreme tenderness he had for them, and his great zeal for the glory of God. If those whom God has appointed the governors of his church, would follow his example, they would never cease to pray for those committed to their charge. IV. God's answer to *Moses*, when that prophet besought him to let him see his glory, shews us, that God dwells in inaccessible light, as St Paul says, *1 Tim. vi. and that no man can see him in this life*. But this ought to convince us, that *Jesus Christ* our Lord is infinitely above *Moses*; *Since he has seen God, and was with him from the beginning*, John i. Lastly, We ought to believe, that though we cannot see God in this life, we shall see him as he is in the life to come; and *this hope should engage us to purify ourselves as he is pure*, *1 John iii.*

C H A P. XXXIV.

I. **G** O D gives *Moses* the second tables of the law. II. He appears to him in a cloud. III. He promises to bring the children of *Israel* into the land of *Canaan*, commanding them to destroy the idols of the *Canaanites*, and to have no dealings with them. IV. God repeats the laws concerning the passover, the consecration of the first-born, the dedication of the first-fruits, the observation of the

the sabbath, and other solemn feasts. V. After this *Moses* comes down from the mount, and covers his face with a veil, because it was very bright, and the people could not stedfastly look upon him.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter, we see, that at the intercession of *Moses*, God pardoned the children of *Israel*; that he gave them a second time the tables of the law, and promised to bring them into the land of *Canaan*; in which we are to acknowledge the great mercy of God, and the efficacy of the intercession of good men. II. *Moses* informs us that when he desired to see the glory of God, he saw it but in part; and that God said nothing on this occasion, but that he was merciful and full of compassion; and that he was also righteous, and would *by no means clear the guilty*. God makes himself known to us in this life, as far as is necessary to induce us to fear him; that is to say, as supremely good, and perfectly just. These are his two principal attributes that engage us to serve him, and to obey his laws. III. The command God gave his people, to make no league with the *Canaanites*, is a warning to us of the danger of having any intercourse with wicked men, and that we ought carefully to avoid it. IV. The laws about the first-born, the first-fruits, the sabbath, and the feasts, were in great wisdom appointed to remind the *Israelites* of the chief favours God had bestowed on them; and to prevent them from imitating the customs and superstitions of the idolatrous nations. V. It is something very remarkable, that when the *Israelites* went to keep their solemn feasts, God suffered not their enemies to invade their country; which was a very particular mark of the divine protection over this people, and a proof that God blesses those who serve him, and defends them from the dangers

dangers to which they might be exposed by their obedience. Lastly, The shining of *Moses's* face, when he came down from the mount, was an assurance to the people, that he spake to them from God; and this change in the person of *Moses* is an emblem of that change which will be wrought in the faithful by the communication of the deity, and of the glory of the blessed, when they shall see God, and enjoy his presence in heaven.

C H A P. XXXV.

TH E R E are two things to be considered in this chapter: I. The repetition of the law concerning the observation of the sabbath. II. The offering made by all the people for the tabernacle.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

MO S E S frequently inculcates the law of the sabbath, because the observation of that day, which returned every week, put the *Israelites* in remembrance of the one only God, Creator of all things, and kept them at a distance from idolatry. II. We find in this chapter that the people contributed with cheerfulness and liberality towards the building of the tabernacle; some presenting gold, silver, and precious stones; others offering fine linen, goats hair, and all materials for the work; every one on this occasion expressing his zeal and readiness. This example should greatly animate Christians to exert themselves heartily in every thing that may contribute to the edification of the church, and the promoting true religion.

C H A P. XXXVI.

THE contributions for the building of the tabernacle being ended, the workmen who were appointed for this work, labour in it as God had commanded. We see likewise in this chapter, in what manner the tabernacle was set up.

C H A P. XXXVII.

A Description of what was in the tabernacle, viz. of the ark of the covenant, of the table of shew-bread, of the candlestick, and of the altar of incense.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

A Description of what was without the tabernacle; viz. of the altar of burnt-offerings, of the laver of brass, and of the outward court; together with a computation of the gold, silver, and brass, which were used in the building of the tabernacle.

REFLECTIONS on Chap. xxxvi, xxxvii, xxxviii.

WHAT is set down in these chapters, being, except in some circumstances, only a repetition of what was said in the foregoing, it is natural to make the same reflections. The quantity of gold, silver and brass made use of for the tabernacle, and the sum of money arising from the half shekel which every *Israelite* paid, shew, that they came out of *Egypt* with great riches, and that they freely and joyfully dedicated a part of them to the service of God.

C H A P. XXXIX.

THIS chapter contains, I. A description of the sacred vestments. II. The tabernacle being finished, the workmen present it to *Moses*.

R E F L E C T I O N S. *

WHAT reflections are proper to be made upon the sacred vestments, may be seen in the xxviiiith chapter of this book. What is particular in this chapter is, that when the tabernacle was finished, the whole work was presented to *Moses*, who finding it, in all respects, such as God had commanded, approved of it, and blessed those who had laboured in the work, and the people who had supplied what was necessary to bring it to perfection. In all this we discover the peoples ready obedience, and *Moses's* faithful discharge of the trust committed to him by God.

C H A P. XL.

I. **T**HE work appointed for the tabernacle, and for the service of God, being ended, God commands the tabernacle to be set up, and every thing placed in order. II. Which being finished, God by the visible tokens of his presence, expressed his approbation of what was done; and signified his pleasure to make his abode in that place, and to conduct the children of *Israel* in all their journeys: and here ends the book of *Exodus*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IT is of use to read this last chapter of *Exodus*, which informs us of the nature of the tabernacle, of its several parts, and their order. The tabernacle

cie was a kind of tent, which might be taken to pieces, and removed from one place to another. In this tabernacle was the most holy place, where was the ark of the covenant, with its staves to support it; and in this ark were kept the tables of the law. In this place were preserved also the pot full of the manna which the children of *Israel* had eat in the wilderness; and *Aaron's* rod which budded. Before the most holy place, which was inclosed with a veil, stood the altar of incense, with the table of the shewbread, which was on the north side, and the golden candlestick, which was on the south side. On the outside of this place, and near the door, stood the laver or brazen-sea, the altar of burnt-offerings, on which the victims were burnt, and the court where the people assembled. When this tabernacle had been thus set in order, *Aaron* and the other priests, after they were consecrated, began to perform divine service in it. God gave marks of his presence, by the cloud which alighted on the tabernacle, to convince the *Israelites*, that he would accept the service they should pay him in that place, and that he would be present in the midst of them. Every time they were to remove from any place, the cloud ascended from off the tabernacle; and when they were to stop, the cloud abode upon it. This tabernacle continued about five hundred years, being often removed from one place to another, till King *Solomon* built the temple of *Jerusalem*. Upon the whole, let it be considered, I. That the tabernacle, with all that appertained to it, had been made by God's command, and according to the pattern which he had given to *Moses*. II. That God, in his great wisdom, had disposed of what related to his service in this manner, the better to suit himself to the condition of the *Israelites*, who were a rude and unrefined people. And lastly, that all these things were figures and shadows of what

what was to come to pass in the times of the gospel, when *Jesus Christ* was to come to establish a more perfect service. This *St Paul* teaches in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, where he says, that when the tabernacle was made, and all things belonging to it set in order, the priests went into it to perform the first service; but that *Jesus Christ*, the high-priest of good things to come, came with a more noble and perfect tabernacle, and purchased eternal redemption for us, and entered into heaven itself. These reflections engage us to bless God for the advantages he has vouchsafed us, and to render him that service which our Lord *Jesus Christ* has prescribed, which consists in worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

The end of the second book of MOSES, called Exodus.



THE
THIRD BOOK of MOSES,
CALLED
LEVITICUS.

ARGUMENT.

The book of Leviticus is so called, because it principally consists of rules and laws to be observed by the Levites and priests in the divine service. It contains, first, the laws concerning sacrifices and offerings; concerning the leprosy, and the several ceremonies which were to be observed by the Israelites. After this are set down several other laws relating to religious worship, and the conduct and behaviour of the Israelites. When we read these laws, we should remember that they were peculiar to the children of Israel; and that they were very wisely appointed, not only to instruct them in the principal duties of religion, but also to keep them at a distance from idolatry. Further, we are to consider, that since we have in Jesus Christ the substance of what was represented in the legal ceremonies, we are under an indispensable obligation to pay to God that spiritual worship and reasonable service required of us in the gospel.

CHAP. I.

THIS chapter gives rules concerning the voluntary sacrifices, and whole burnt-offerings, or sacrifices in which the victims were wholly consumed by fire, which were of three kinds; either
of

of great cattle, such as bulls and calves; or small cattle, as lambs and goats; or of birds, as turtle doves and pigeons.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **I**T must be considered on this chapter, that besides the sacrifices which were required of necessity and indispensable obligation, there were others voluntary, which every one offered of his own free-will, and according to his abilities. However, the *Israelites* were not left to their liberty, to offer them just as they pleased, but were to do it in the manner God had directed. **II.** These voluntary sacrifices, as appears from this chapter, were very acceptable to God; who graciously receives whatever we do with a sincere heart. **III.** It is likewise to be observed that those who wanted ability to offer great or small cattle might offer pigeons. By which means the poor, as well as the rich, had it in their power to perform this religious duty. God receives no less graciously the offerings of the poor than of the rich, if they proceed from a good intention.

C H A P. II.

THIS chapter treats of the meat-offerings and the first-fruits, which were to be presented to the Lord.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT we are chiefly concerned to observe on the laws relating to the meat-offerings and first-fruits, is, that a part of them was burnt in honour of God, and the rest belonged to the priests. By which means God was pleased not only to engage the *Israelites* to the discharge of a religious and so-

solemn act, acknowledging his bountiful hand the giver of all that the earth produced; but also to provide for the support of his ministers. Christians are not less obliged by the laws of Christ, to express their gratitude to God for his temporal blessings, and to provide for the necessary subsistence of their spiritual guides.

C H A P. III.

THIS chapter treats of the peace-offerings, which the *Israelites* offered in token of their gratitude to God, and to obtain his favour.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

AS the design of the peace-offerings was to render, in a solemn manner, thanks and praise to God for the favours received from him, and to engage him to continue his blessings; we should learn from this chapter, when God vouchsafes any particular favour, our indispensable obligation to testify our gratitude to him; and since his kindness and love to us is the source of all our happiness, it should be our chief care to procure it.

C H A P. IV,

THIS chapter prescribes the manner of offering sacrifices for sins committed through ignorance, either by the high-priest, or by the people in general, or by any of the rulers, or by private persons.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THAT we may reap advantage from the reading of this chapter, we must make these four reflections. I. That since God had appointed sacrifices

fices to atone for sins of ignorance, these sins, tho much less heinous than wilful and obstinate sins, ought carefully to be avoided; that to this end we ought to be well instructed in our duty, and have a strict guard over our conduct; and that when we have happened to sin through ignorance, and perceive our error, we should be sincerely grieved even for these sins, and remedy them as much as in us lies. II. The second reflection is, that those in public character, such as the priests and rulers of the people, were to make an atonement for their sins, because they were more grievous, and might bring the wrath of God, not only upon those who had committed them, but upon the whole people. III. The third consideration respects the ceremonies observed in these sacrifices. Those who offered them laid their hands on the head of the victims, to signify that they were sacrificed in their stead; then the priest took the blood of the victims, and sprinkled some of the blood before the veil of the sanctuary, and put some upon the horns of the altar of incense, if the sacrifice was offered for the priest or for all the people; the rest of the blood was poured out at the foot of the altar of burnt-offerings; the fat and the kidneys were burnt upon this altar, and the rest of the body of the beast was burnt without the camp. Lastly, We are to remember, that though these ceremonies had no virtue in themselves to expiate sins, yet God appointed them to teach the people of *Israel*, that when they had sinned they were to confess their sins before God, and apply to him for mercy; and that when they practised these rites in obedience to God's commands, he was appeased and forgave their misdeeds.

C H A P. V.

I. **G**OD commands that those shall be punished, who being bound by oath to speak the truth, do not do it. II. He then directs the manner of making atonement for those who had touched any unclean thing; for those who had made rash oaths and not kept them; and lastly, for those who had ignorantly withheld any thing that was dedicated to God, and broken any of his commandments.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE chapter we have just been reading, teaches us, in the first place, that it is a crime deserving the severest punishment, not to declare the truth when we are called upon by oath to do it; that we are obliged to perform our oaths, as far as lawfully we may, and to abstain from inconsiderate and rash oaths. II. The laws relating to sins committed through ignorance and inadvertence, and the obligation those who had fallen into them were under to confess and make atonement for them, shews it to be the will of God, that we should avoid, as much as possible, not only deliberate sins, but even those sins which we may rashly and inconsiderately fall into; since these last render us guilty before God, because we ought to take heed to our duty and our conduct. III. Since God here commands those who had fallen into sins of ignorance, to confess their sins, and to offer sacrifices; and if they were not in a condition to offer sheep, to offer young pigeons; or, if they were extremely poor, a little flour; we are to consider, that all manner of sins should be repaired and atoned for by confession and repentance; that no one can plead exemption from the obligation of remedying, to the utmost of his power, the evil he has committed. IV. It is to be
remarked,

remarked, lastly, that those who had taken or withheld by mistake any thing dedicated to God, were not only to offer a sacrifice, but also to make restitution, and even to add to it a fifth part. Whence we learn our indispensable obligation to restore whatever we are unlawfully possessed of, and that if those who had withheld any sacred thing ignorantly were bound to make restitution, even above the value of it ; the duty of restitution must be still more indispensable, when we have taken and withheld, knowingly and wilfully, what does not belong to us.

C H A P. VI.

GOD commands, I. That those who should deny having in their hands any thing that had been committed to their trust, or should conceal any thing which they had found belonging to their neighbour, should make restitution, and offer a sacrifice to atone for their sin. II. To this are added, laws concerning the burnt-offerings, and the fire which was to be continually burning on the altar to consume them ; concerning the meat-offerings which were in part to be offered to God, and the rest to be eat by the priests, of the offering which was to be presented by the priests, when they were appointed and consecrated to their office ; and lastly, concerning the sin-offerings, and the right the priests had to eat thereof.

R E F L E C T I O N S,

WHAT is most deserving of our attention in this chapter is, the law relating to those who, having any thing deposited in their hands should disown it, or should withhold their neighbour's property by fraud or violence, or keep back any thing lost. Such persons were obliged by the law of God, not only to restore what they

they unjustly detained, but to give a fifth part over and above the value of the thing. This law shews, that what is committed to our trust should be esteemed sacred; that it is a great fault to disown the truth, to attempt to withhold what was intrusted with us, and not to restore what we have gotten by fraud or violence; that any thing found should be returned to the owners; that restitution is a duty indispensable, and that those who refuse to submit to this duty, cannot obtain forgiveness. As to the other laws, concerning burnt-offerings, the sacrifices for sin, and the meat-offerings; and those wherein God determines what portion of the sacrifices belonged to the priests; we may, with *St Paul*, make this particular reflection, added to those mentioned above; that since, by the law of God, the priests eat of the sacrifices, the will of the Lord is, that the ministers of the gospel should live by the gospel.

CHAP. VII.

I. **T**HIS chapter treats of the manner of offering the trespass-offering, the thanksgiving-sacrifices, and those which were voluntary, or in consequence of some vow. II. God forbids those that were unclean to eat of the sacrifices. III. He likewise prohibits the eating of the fat of the beasts sacrificed. IV. The use of blood is absolutely forbidden; and the priests right to the peace-offerings regulated.

REFLECTIONS.

THE laws concerning the trespass-offering, and the sacrifices of thanksgiving, had a natural tendency to inform the *Jews*, that it was their duty to appease the deity by repentance, when they had offended him, and to express their gratitude for the mercies they received at his hands. The law con-

cerning vows, teaches us, religiously to perform whatever we have vowed unto the Lord. If those who had contracted any legal uncleanness were not allowed to eat of the sacrifices, let us seriously consider how much less we ought to appear before God when polluted with sin. The *Israelites* were forbidden to eat the fat of bulls, and lambs, and goats, because the fat of those animals was burnt in their sacrifices in honour of the deity. The absolute prohibition of eating any blood, was the renewing of a law much more ancient, which God had given to *Noah* after the flood. We learn, lastly, from this chapter, in what manner God had provided for the priests, by assigning them a portion in the oblations and sacrifices of the children of *Israel*.

C H A P. . VIII.

I. **M** O S E S, having assembled all the people together, clothes *Aaron* and his sons with the sacred vestments. II. He anoints with the holy oil the tabernacle and all that was therein; and *Aaron*; and consecrateth the priests by a solemn sacrifice; observing all the ceremonies appointed by God, and set down in the twenty ninth chapter of *Exodus*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

W E see here that *Moses* punctually performed all that God had commanded to be observed in his worship. God thought fit that all these religious ceremonies should be practised upon this solemn occasion, that the people might reverence the service to be performed in the tabernacle; and respect those appointed by God for the celebration of it; and also that the priests themselves, knowing to whom they were dedicated, might distinguish themselves from others by a stricter holiness.

C H A P. IX.

AARON, after his consecration, offers sacrifices for himself and for the people: which God graciously accepts, and in token of his acceptance appears in his glory, and sends fire to consume the sacrifice.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are to take particular notice in this chapter; that when *Aaron* entered upon his ministry, he offered sacrifice for himself, as well as for the sins of the people. The priests being sinners had need to expiate their own sins, before they made atonement for the sins of others. This *St Paul* mentions as a remarkable difference between the ancient priests and *Jesus Christ*, when he says, "We have an high priest, who is holy, harmless, undefiled; separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not, as the high priests under the law, to offer sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the people." The tokens God gave of his presence before all the congregation, appearing in his glory, and causing fire to descend upon the sacrifices, was sufficient to convince the *Israelites* that the ministry of the priests, and the form of worship given them by *Moses*, were perfectly agreeable to the divine will; and that if they served him faithfully, they should enjoy his presence, and feel the effects of his favour.

C H A P. X.

INADAB and Abihu, the sons of *Aaron*, having put strange fire into their censers, to burn incense, instead of taking fire from the altar,

are destroyed suddenly by fire. II. *Moses* forbids their father *Aaron* and their brethren to weep for them, or to go out of the tabernacle. III. He likewise forbids them to drink wine or any liquor that might intoxicate, when they were to minister in the holy places. IV. Upon this occasion the law concerning the priests portion in the oblations and sacrifices is repeated; and *Aaron* and his sons are reproved by *Moses* for neglecting to observe this last law.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

GOD slew *Nadab* and *Abihu*, the sons of *Aaron*, to punish them for breaking the commandment of God, in putting fire into their censers which was not taken from the altar, to make them an example, and to inspire both priests and people with dread, that no one might ever after presume to make any alteration in the form of divine worship appointed by God himself. Whence we may learn, that men can have no right to serve God otherwise than he has commanded, and that he never lets those go unpunished who break his laws. The Lord forbade *Aaron* and his sons, upon pain of death, to use any expressions of mourning on this occasion, or even to depart from the tabernacle, since they could not have done it without disgracing the holiness of their character, and profaning the sacred vestments; and that they might testify, by this means, that they were more concerned for the honour of God, than for their own interest, and that they acquiesced in the just judgment of God upon *Nadab* and *Abihu*. At this time God forbade the priests to drink wine when they were to minister in the tabernacle. And the prohibition being made on this occasion, gives room to conjecture, that *Nadab* and *Abihu* were disordered with wine when they offered strange fire; and that it was to prevent any thing of the like nature for the future, that this law was

was given. It must therefore be considered as utterly unworthy of Christians, and especially of the ministers of religion, to give way to excess of wine; and that as they are called by their most holy calling to serve God continually, they ought to live in great sobriety and temperance.

C H A P. XI.

THIS chapter contains, I. The law concerning clean and unclean beasts. II. The manner of purifying those who were defiled by touching unclean beasts.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

ON this chapter it must be observed, that the distinction between clean beasts and unclean, was very ancient, and not unknown even before the flood, but observed with regard to sacrifices, as we find in the book of *Genesis*. God thought fit to give his people *Israel* more particular laws on this head, to distinguish them from the neighbouring nations, who did likewise make a distinction between animals, both in religion and the uses of common life; but he appointed a distinction quite different from any observed by idolators: this he did, to put the *Israelites* in mind, as is observed in this chapter, that they were a holy people, dedicated to God, and distinguished from other nations. Besides this, these laws were given to prevent the *Jews* from falling into a brutish licentiousness with regard to eating; to train them up to temperance and purity; to keep them in a dependance upon God; even in things relating to their food; and for reasons of health too, with respect to some animals. And to render this law more inviolable, God declares all those unclean, who did but barely touch the flesh of these beasts when dead.

The reasons of these laws having ceased, they regard not us; since the gospel teaches us that there is no creature, which is fit for food, which we may not eat, observing the rules of prudence and christian temperance.

C H A P. XII.

THE law relating to women in childbed, and their purification.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS law which forbade women to come into the sanctuary, till a certain number of days after their delivery, and which required them to offer the sacrifice prescribed, was not only founded on reasons of decency and modesty, but was also designed to inspire them with a great reverence for holy places; and to prove the necessity of appearing before God with a pure heart. By this means women had likewise an opportunity given them of expressing their gratitude and thankfulness to their deliverer. The blessed Virgin *Mary* conformed to this law after the birth of *Jesus*, and when she presented him in the temple, we read in the gospel that she offered the offering here prescribed,

C H A P. XIII.

THIS chapter treats of the several kinds of leprosy, and how the priests were to judge of this disease.

C H A P. XIV.

GOD gives directions for the purification of lepers, and of houses infected with the leprosy.

R E F L E C T I O N S on Chap. xiii, xiv.

THE leprosy spoken of in these two chapters was a disease common in *Egypt*, whence the children of *Israel* came, and in the neighbouring countries; there was one kind which infected the very garments, and even the houses. The laws God gave on this subject were partly political, appointed to prevent this contagious distemper from spreading among the people, and infecting them; and partly religious. The priests were judges in this disease, and the lepers could not be reputed clean till the priests had pronounced them so, and they had offered the sacrifices and oblations prescribed by the law; which our Lord observed when he had healed the leper, *Matth. viii. 4.* Thus these laws were designed to keep the *Jews* in strict adherence to God and their religion, and prevent their having recourse to unlawful means to get cured of so dreadful a distemper. Lastly, They had likewise a moral use and meaning, as the other laws relating to legal uncleanness and purification had; which was to instruct the *Jews*, that the impure and unclean cannot please God. From these chapters, let us make the same conclusion, and consider, that if the leprosy, which was an involuntary evil, and defiled not the soul, separated those who were infected with it from the intercourse and society of men; those who live in sin can never be reputed members of the church, nor have any communion with God, while they continue in such a state.

C H A P. XV.

LAWS concerning the uncleannesses of men and women, and the manner of their cleansing.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IT was necessary God should give these laws to the *Jews*, to teach them not only the external purity of the body ; but also the internal purity of the soul, which consists in chastity and continence, and avoiding every thing that may defile the body or soul before God.

C H A P. XVI.

THIS chapter contains the institution of the sacrifice offered on the day of atonement, which was the most solemn sacrifice in the year. This festival was kept on the tenth day of the seventh month, which was a day of fasting, and of rest for all the people. On that day, the high priest offered a sacrifice for his own sins and the sins of the people ; entered into the most holy place, and sprinkled it with the blood of the victims ; and when he came out, they brought the goat appointed by lot, and when the priest had confessed over it the sins of the people, they sent it into the wilderness : this was called the goat *bazazel*, or scape-goat. The intent of this ceremony was to signify, that the sins of the *Israelites*, were expiated and taken away, as if the goat had carried them away with him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE great day of atonement was appointed by God, to be kept once every year ; that on that day the *Israelites* might humble themselves before him,

him, by fasting and confession of their sins, and might obtain pardon and forgiveness. This was the design of the solemn sacrifice offered to God, and of the high priest's entering into the most holy place. The use which Christians are to make of all this, is expressed by St *Paul* in his epistle to the *Hebrews*, particularly in the ninth chapter. His reflections are these: I. That as the sins of the *Jews* were expiated by the sacrifice on the day of atonement, and by the entrance of the high priest into the most holy place; so *Jesus Christ*, by the sacrifice of himself, and by his ascension into heaven, has fully atoned for our sins, and procured us admission to the joys of heaven. II. The apostle takes notice of several remarkable differences between the ancient sacrifices, and that of *Jesus Christ*. 1. That the priests offered sacrifices for their own sins, because they were sinners; whereas Christ being perfectly holy and separate from sinners, had no need to offer any sacrifice for his own sins. 2. That the priests entered into the holy place but once in the year, which shewed that the way into heaven was not yet opened; whereas *Jesus Christ*, by his own sacrifice, has opened to us the way to everlasting life. 3. That these ancient sacrifices were repeated every year, which was a proof of their weakness and insufficiency; whereas the sacrifice of our Lord was to be but once offered. St *Paul* further observes, that the high priest entered into the sanctuary with the blood of the victims; but that Christ entered into heaven with his own blood. Lastly, This apostle affirms, that the blood of beasts could not of itself sanctify men, nor reconcile them with God; while the blood of Christ is efficacious to the expiation of our sins, purging our consciences. All these considerations should fill us with a just sense of the advantages we enjoy, and the necessity we are under of making a right use and improvement

improvement of them by faith and repentance; without which, this great sacrifice of our saviour will stand us in no stead. It appears, moreover, from this law, which enjoined the *Jews* to fast on the day of atonement, that it is a duty most acceptable to God, to humble ourselves before him by solemn fasts, and even to have seasons set apart for that purpose.

C H A P. XVII.

I. **I**N this chapter, God forbids the offering of sacrifices any where but at the door of the tabernacle, or to any other but to him. II. He forbids the eating of such beasts as died of themselves, or had been torn in pieces by wild beasts.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE charge given to the *Jews* not to offer sacrifice any where except in the place which God had chosen, and in the presence of the priests, was designed to preserve among the *Israelites* the purity and uniformity of divine worship, and prevent them from introducing a false worship, and falling into idolatry. And the care taken by God himself to prevent this, proves, that religion ought to be preserved in its purity, and that we should never turn aside from the rules prescribed in God's word. The eating of blood and of beasts that died of themselves was forbidden, in order to keep the *Jews* at a distance from murder, cruelty, and the barbarous customs of the idolatrous nations; as well as from the custom they had of eating blood in their worship of the false gods. It appears likewise from this chapter, that the use of blood was forbidden by God, because the blood was shed to make an atonement for the sins of men, and therefore ought to be looked upon as a thing offered

offered to God, and devoted to a religious use; which shews, that this law was appointed with great wisdom. What we are to consider upon this head, is, that the law of Christ, being a law of love and charity, is still more inconsistent with inhumanity and shedding of blood than the law of *Moses*; and therefore, that we ought to abhor these crimes and every thing that tends towards them.

C H A P. XVIII.

- I. **G**OD forbids the *Israelites* to imitate the crimes of the *Egyptians* and *Canaanites*, and particularly their impurities and incestuous marriages. II. He declares, that it was on account of these sins that the *Canaanites* were going to be destroyed, and that if the *Israelites* imitated them, they too should be destroyed.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE chief thing we are to take notice of in this chapter is, that the sins of uncleanness had drawn the *Canaanites* into the most horrid crimes, since God was obliged to give these laws concerning incestuous marriages, and other abominations, to prevent the *Jews* from falling into the same disorders, in imitation of these abominable nations. So that the reading of this chapter should inspire us with the utmost abhorrence of all uncleanness, so as to avoid all that is contrary, not only to the law of *Moses*, which is but a small thing for Christians; but likewise to those of the gospel, which so expressly command purity and chastity. Observe likewise, and with great attention, that God expressly declares, that the land wherein the *Canaanites* dwelt could no longer bear them, by reason of their grievous sins; that he was going to root them out; and that if the

Israelites

Israelites should fall into the like abominations, they too should feel the divine vengeance. This suffers us not to doubt one moment but God abhors uncleanness, and that the sins committed by the inhabitants of any country, do defile that country, and bring down upon it the curse of God, when they become frequent, when they go unpunished, and nothing is done to hinder them.

C H A P. XIX. 1—18.

I. **T**HE laws contained in this chapter, relate to the observation of the sabbath and other holy-days, to idolatry, and to sacrifices. II. God forbids the *Jews* to glean their fields and their vineyards; to steal; to swear falsely; to withhold the wages of labourers; to hurt the deaf or the blind; to give wrong judgment; to slander and hate their neighbour.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

ALL these laws are of the greatest importance, and most of them regard Christians as well as they did the *Jews*. The duties here enjoined are such as these; to honour father and mother; to respect religion; to serve God with a free heart; and, in conformity to his holy word, to be charitable to the poor, and not to be covetous, particularly in time of harvest and vintage, and gathering of fruits. We are likewise taught here, that it is a great sin before God to injure our neighbour, to take a false oath, to withhold the labourers wages, and to deride those who have any bodily defects, as the deaf and blind; or to do them any harm; and to have respect to persons in the execution of justice or judgment, either by favouring the poor and needy, or by paying a deference to the rich and great. Lastly, We hear learn

to abstain from slander, hatred and revenge; to rebuke our neighbour when he sins, and love him as ourselves. All these things are still more strictly commanded by the law of *Jesus Christ*, than they were by the law of *Moses*; so that they are to Christians still more sacred and inviolable.

C H A P. XIX. 19—37.

I. **G**OD forbids the mixing of things of several kinds; orders the unclean to be punished; forbids the eating the first fruits of the trees, consulting with forcerers, shaving their beards, and cutting their bodies in mourning, after the manner of idolators, and imitating their impurities. II. God commands them to honour the aged; to love strangers, and to have just weights and measures.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

MOST of these laws were given to the *Jews*, to keep them from following the superstitious customs and practices of idolators. God forbade the mixture of divers kinds, to keep the *Jews* from all criminal commerce, as well as from superstition and idolatry. He would not suffer them to eat of the fruit which the trees bore the first three years, because they might not eat of the fruit of any tree before they had offered the first fruits to God; and because before the fourth year, the fruits were generally but of little value, and therefore could not be presented to the Lord, who had commanded the best of every kind to be offered to him. This law was also opposed to the customs of the idolators; and tended to teach them, that whatever the earth produced was owing to his bounty. The other laws teach us, that it is extremely wicked to consult forcerers; that we ought not to afflict ourselves to excess for the dead; that

impurity

impurity is a sin, and that it ought to be punished; that we should respect old age, do justice to strangers, and use true weights and measures. These are duties of piety, purity and justice, which concern all men without exception; but which Christians are much more obliged to observe than the *Jews*.

C H A P. XX.

GOD commands them to put to death those who caused their children to pass through the fire, in honour of *Moloch*, the idol of the *Ammonites*; those who make application to vizards, and the vizards themselves; those that cursed father or mother, adulterers, incestuous persons, and such as fell into other enormous impurities. Lastly, *Moses* exhorts the *Israelites* to be holy, to keep the laws of God, and to avoid the customs and manners of the *Canaanites*:

R E F L E C T I O N S :

THE considerations which these laws suggest to us, are as follow: the prohibition of burning children, and offering them to the idol *Moloch*, shews us what horrible and excessive cruelties the idolatrous people fell into in the service of their false gods; and what men who know not the true God are capable of. Observe next, that the law of God very expressly condemns divination and magick, as things not only vain, but highly criminal; and that those who applied themselves to sorcerers, and the sorcerers themselves, were to be punished with death; as there is none but God who knows things future and secret, it is the last degree of impiety to apply to diviners, and give credit to them. It was likewise the command of God that those that cursed father or mother, as well as adulterers, and those who defiled themselves with abominable

nable impurities, should be put to death, both men and women. From whence we may judge how abominable those crimes are, and how severely God will punish in the other world those Christians who have given themselves up to them. Lastly, The repeated exhortations of God to the *Jews*, not to imitate the *Canaanites* in their lewdness, and to be to him a holy people, ought to put us Christians in mind, that God having separated us from the world, *we should not be conformed to this present world; but as he who has called us is holy; we ought also to be holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.* In this manner does the apostle St Peter apply to Christians the exhortation contained in this chapter.

C H A P. XXI.

I. **T**HE laws contained in this chapter relate to the purity of the priests; their manner of mourning, and their marriages. II. God commands that the daughters of priests should be put to death, if they fell into uncleanness; and he forbids the receiving any person with any bodily blemish or defect into the service of the tabernacle.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

GOD would not suffer the priests to defile themselves for the dead; that is, to assist at the burial of the dead, nor to put on the appearance of mourning, except for the death of those who were very nearly related to them. The reason of this prohibition was, that this would have rendered them unclean in the eye of the law; and incapable of attending in the tabernacle, and performing divine service. This law, and the other laws contained in this chapter, were given chiefly on these two accounts: I. The better

better to restrain the people, and the priests themselves, from idolatry, and the customs of idolators; and to prevent in the persons or families of the priests, the same disorders that were to be seen among the priests of false religions. II. That the holiness of the priests might render religion itself more venerable; and their good example might teach the rest of the *Israelites* to be holy also. The law that excluded from the service of the tabernacle such as had any blemish in their bodies, tended also to the honour of religion; it was likewise founded upon this reason, that such persons were not proper for the functions then performed by the priests, which required a body strong; and fitly disposed to perform them. The reflections we are to make on this with regard to the christian church is, that the pastors and ministers of religion should be distinguished by a holy exemplary life, and especially by their great purity; and, in particular, that their families should be well regulated: in a word, that they should suffer nothing that may expose religion to contempt.

C H A P. XXII.

THE laws here prescribed, respect, I. The purity required of the priests before they might eat of the holy things. II. They direct what persons of the priests family were permitted and forbidden to eat thereof. III. What beasts were to be offered in sacrifices, with their qualities, age, and other circumstances.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we see that God required of his priests great purity, since those who had contracted any legal uncleanness, were not only disqualified for the time to perform any of their functions,
but

but even to eat of the holy things appointed for their support, as the flesh of the sacrifices, and the offerings of the people. Whereby God was pleased to teach them, and all the *Jews*, to reverence every thing relating to his service. For the same reason, all who were not of the priest's household, were forbidden to eat of what was set apart for the nourishment of the priests and their families. Lastly, God commanded the *Israelites* to offer him nothing but the best of every kind; and the beasts which had any blemish were rejected, because those who presented them, did it out of a principle of covetousness, and for want of respect to the divinity. Whatever we do to the honour of God, should be done with pleasure and with a free will, and in the most perfect manner we are able.

C H A P. XXIII.

I. **G**OD prescribes the observation of the sabbath, of the passover, of the feast of the first-fruits, and that of pentecost. II. He then commands them to keep the feast of trumpets, the day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IT has been several times observed, that God had established the observation of the sabbath among the *Jews*, in memory of the creation of the world. The design of the passover was to preserve the remembrance of their deliverance out of *Egypt*; and the offering which was made at that time of the first-fruits, was a solemn homage and acknowledgment that the *Jews* made to God, for the fruits which the land of *Canaan* produced. The pentecost was a feast of thanksgiving, celebrated by the *Jews* after harvest, as the mark of their gratitude to God;

it was likewise designed to put them in mind of the promulgation of the law, upon the fiftieth day after they came out from *Egypt*. The three other feasts, *viz.* the feast of trumpets, the day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles, were kept in the same month. The feast of trumpets fell on the first day of the month, and was so named, because that day, which was the first in the civil year, was ushered in with the sound of trumpets. The day of atonement was kept on the tenth day of the same month; on which day the *Jews* fasted, and offered a solemn sacrifice to God, as is mentioned in the sixteenth chapter of this book. The feast of tabernacles began on the fifteenth day of the same month, and lasted eight days. During which time the *Jews* dwelt in tents made with branches of trees, in memory of their fathers dwelling in tents in the wilderness, after they came out of *Egypt*. We no longer celebrate those feasts, as the *Jews* did, nor for the same reasons; but the Christian church observes *Sunday*, which was the day of our Lord's resurrection, and of the creation of the world: we likewise keep the feasts of *Christmas*, *Easter*, and *Whitsuntide*, in remembrance of the great events which happened at those times. Christians may still set apart days for fasting and humiliation, or to praise God for his mercies. The spirit and design of these laws is in general this, that we should never forget the mercies of the Lord, and especially his most signal favours; above all, the blessing of our redemption.

C H A P. XXIV.

IN this chapter we read, I. The law concerning the oil that was to be burnt in the sanctuary. II. That concerning the shew-bread. III. The history of the blasphemer that was stoned. IV. The punishment

ment of murderers, and of those that kill the cattle of other people, or any way injure their neighbour.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E law concerning the oil* for the lamps, which were to burn in the sanctuary, was appointed, that that holy place might be always illuminated. The shew-bread, which was placed on the table in the sanctuary, was a solemn acknowledgment, whereby the *Israelites* testified their dependence upon God, for all the good things which the land of *Canaan* produced. The loaves were twelve in number, according to the number of the twelve tribes of *Israel*; and, when they were taken away, they were for the priests to eat. This law should teach Christians to be grateful for the blessings that God bestows on them. The history of the blasphemer, who was stoned, and the command of God to put blasphemers to death, is very remarkable, and ought to inspire us with an extreme horror for blasphemy and impiety. Lastly, The command given by God to put murderers to death, and to punish others that use their neighbour ill, or do him any injury, shews, that those that commit these sins ought to be punished by the magistrate; that violence, injustice, wrath, and revenge, are forbidden, and consequently ought to be avoided, not only for fear of the punishment to be inflicted by the judges, but out of respect to the divine laws, and because these sins are intirely opposite to justice and charity.

C H A P. XXV.

G O D commands, I. That they let the land rest every seventh year. II. That they keep a year of jubilee every fiftieth year; upon which oc-

casion he regulates the manner of buying lands, houses and slaves.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE reflection we are to make on the sabbatical year, is, that as the *Jews* rested the seventh day of every week, in remembrance of God's creating the world in six days, and resting the seventh day, they were, for the same reason, commanded to let the land rest every seventh year. Whereby the *Jews* acknowledged, that the fruitfulness of the country proceeded only from God; which they had a miraculous proof of in the earth's yielding, the sixth year, the produce of three years. As for the year of jubilee, which returned at the end of forty-nine years; in this year all estates that had been sold returned to their former possessors; so that no estate could be sold for ever, except houses in cities, and which did not belong to the *Levites*. *Hebrew* slaves were likewise sent away free. And to secure the observance of this law, God appointed that the value of estates should be greater or less, in proportion as the year of jubilee was nearer or farther off. The design of this law, as is observed in this chapter, was to teach the *Israelites*, and their posterity, that the land of *Canaan* belonged to God, who had given it to their fathers; to preserve the distinction of tribes and inheritances; to provide for the wants of the poor; and to prevent the rich from depriving the poor of their goods and liberty, by purchasing lands and slaves for ever. In all this we discover the great wisdom of God, and the admirable manner of his governing the people of *Israel*. Moreover, the laws contained in this chapter, put us in mind, that all the good things we enjoy come from God; that it is a great sin to oppress the poor, and to lend money to the necessitous upon hard and unjust terms; that
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the poor and strangers are to be treated with equity and humanity ; and that we ought to be disinterested and charitable in all our conduct. It appears likewise from this chapter, that in buying and selling due regard should be had to the value of things, and a just proportion be observed. Lastly, Let it be considered, that if God would not have the *Jews* subject those of their own nation to slavery, because they were all equally the Lord's servants, and free men ; Christian masters are still more engaged to be just and mild towards their servants, who are the redeemed of *Jesus Christ*, as well as they ; remembering, *that their servants, and they themselves too, have a master in heaven ; and that with him there is no respect of persons.*

C H A P. XXVI.

I. **M** O S E S exhorts the *Jews* to shun idolatry, and to observe the sabbath. II. He sets before them the blessings they would receive from God, if they obeyed his commandments. III. He denounces the curses that would fall upon them, if they did not obey them.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

T H E first observation we are to make here is, that though the temporal blessings that God promised the children of *Israel*, if they would keep his laws, do not belong to Christians ; it nevertheless appears from hence, that the happiness of men depends upon the observation of God's commands, who always bestows his favours upon those that fear him ; and that godliness has the promise of the present life, as well as of the life to come. The curses

contained in this chapter, next demand our most serious attention. In them we clearly see all that afterwards happened to the people of *Israel*, by reason of their sins; how God visited them upon divers occasions, by famine, by pestilence, by war, and other scourges; and how, at last, he delivered them to their enemies, and drove them out of the land of *Canaan*; particularly when they were carried away captive into *Assyria* and *Babylon*, and at last destroyed by the *Romans*. God promised, however, to restore the *Jews*, after he had afflicted them. This restoration partly happened when they returned from their captivity; but it will be more perfectly accomplished in the last days, when that nation shall be converted. These are noble and convincing evidences of the divine authority of the scriptures; the history of the *Jewish* nation exactly confirming the truth of all these predictions, which have been made above three thousand years. This should instruct Christians to dread the curses denounced in the gospel against impenitent sinners; especially since those curses are infinitely more terrible than those contained in this chapter.

C H A P. XXVII.

I. **T**HIS chapter treats of redeeming persons, and other things that had been devoted to God by a vow. II. The Lord there commands the punctual and faithful payments of the tithes, both of the fruits of the earth and of beasts.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS chapter gives us the following instruction; that vows ought to be religiously observed; and that when a thing has been devoted to God, and to holy uses, it cannot be applied to any other, without

out the guilt of sacrilege. The exactness to be observed in paying of tithes, both of the fruits of the earth, and of beasts; and the charge not to pay the tithe with that which was least in size or value, shews, that it is sacrilege to use any fraud or deceit in that which is set apart for divine service, or other religious uses; but that we ought to give with pleasure, even the best and most precious of our substance.

*The end of the Third book of MOSES, called
LEVITICUS.*



THE
FOURTH BOOK of MOSES,
CALLED
NUMBERS.

A R G U M E N T.

The book of Numbers has its name from the numbering of the children of Israel, which is the business of the former chapters of this book. It begins in the second month of the second year after their departure out of Egypt, and ends in the eleventh month of the fortieth year, taking in the space of thirty-nine years. This book contains likewise several laws which God gave to the Israelites; and an account of several remarkable events, while they were in the wilderness.

C H A P. I.

IN the first chapter of this book we find *Moses* and *Aaron*, after they were come out of *Egypt*, taking the number of all the children of *Israel*, which was six hundred thousand men.

R E F L E C T I O N S *after reading the chapter.*

THE principal reflection to be made on the numbering of the children of *Israel*, is, as *Moses* observed to them a little before his death, the prodigious increase of the posterity of *Jacob*. They were, when they went down into *Egypt*, but three-score

score and ten persons ; and when they came out, which was about two hundred and ten years after, they were no less than six hundred thousand, without taking into the account those that were under twenty years old, or the women, or those who were not able to go out to war, or the *Levites*. Thus did God fulfil his promise made to *Abraham*, of giving him a numerous posterity, as many as the stars of heaven for multitude, or as the sand upon the sea-shore. This too heightens and confirms the miracle of supporting so great a multitude in the wilderness for forty years ; which would have been absolutely impossible, if God had not miraculously provided for them, by the manna he sent for their food during that space. The *Levites* were not numbered with the rest of the *Israelites*, because they were not obliged to go out to war ; and because they were wholly taken up in the service of the tabernacle.

C H A P. II.

WE see in this chapter the disposition of the camp of *Israel*, and the order of their marches.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE beautiful order in which the tribes of *Israel* were disposed when they were encamped, and when they were on their march, is worth notice, each having its proper post and rank assigned. This was necessary to prevent confusion, which otherwise must have been inevitable in so great a multitude. II. God ordered the twelve tribes to be encamped and ranged, at a certain distance round about the tabernacle. By which means that holy place was in the midst of the camp, and secure from danger. The *Israelites* might too from hence be convinced, that
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the privilege of having God and his service in the midst of them, was the foundation of all their happiness. What therefore God commanded, in this respect, was worthy of the divine wisdom, and tended equally to maintain order among the people, and keep them attached to God and religion.

C H A P. III, and IV.

M O S E S sets down in these two chapters the genealogy of the priests ; the choice God made of the *Levites*, who were joined to them ; and the several offices and functions of the *Levites*, with regard to the tabernacle, when it was to be removed from one place to another.

REFLECTIONS on chap. iii, and iv.

G O D had made among the *Levites*, as he had done among the other tribes, proper regulations. The three principal families of the tribe of *Levi* had each its peculiar office ; which God thought fit so to regulate in order to preserve purity and uniformity, and to prevent change and confusion in the divine worship. The *Levites* were chosen in the stead of the first-born of all the people, which were the Lord's ; and as the number of the first-born was greater than of the *Levites*, they were to redeem the overplus, by paying for each of them five shekels. This was intended by God to preserve the remembrance of the difference he had made between his own people and the *Egyptians*, when he destroyed all the first-born of *Egypt*, and saved the first-born of *Israel*. By this ceremony the *Israelites* were to acknowledge themselves to be the Lord's, and their indispensable obligation to dedicate themselves to his service.

C H A P.

C H A P. V.

IN this chapter God commands three things :
 I. That all those persons who were defiled should be turned out of the camp. II. That those who had wronged any one, should make restitution. III. That women suspected of adultery, should be tried by the waters of jealousy.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

HERE are three things to be observed : I. That God commanded all unclean persons to be put out of the camp, to shew the *Israelites* that he expected of them very great purity ; from whence Christians should infer, that the church of Christ should be pure, and no scandalous sinners suffered to remain in its communion, and that every one should shun and avoid them. II. This chapter teaches us, that those who have wronged another, in any manner whatever, are obliged to make an exact and compleat restitution ; and that if the persons to whom such restitution is to be made cannot be found, it should be devoted and dedicated to the Lord. The frequent repetition of this law of restitution shews the indispensable nature of this duty. III. The law relating to the waters of jealousy should convince us of the greatness of the sin of adultery ; and we ought to consider, that if God does not discover and punish sins of uncleanness, after the same manner that he did among the *Jews*, for particular reasons taken from the condition of that people ; these sins are not hid from him, and he will bring them to light at the day of judgment, and punish them most severely in the life to come.

C H A P. VI.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. The law relating to *Nazarites*. The persons so called had devoted themselves to God in a particular manner, and by solemn vows, either for a time or for their whole lives. God here determines what they were obliged by this vow to observe. II. *Moses* sets down at the end of the chapter the form in which the priests were to bless the people.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE vow of the *Nazarites*, and part of the ceremonies which they observed, were of very ancient use, even among other nations. God commands those who entered into this vow, to do it to his honour; and appoints what ceremonies were to be practised either in fulfilling of the vow, or in order to be freed from the obligation of it. This law is no longer observed. However, Christians may take occasion from hence to remember, that they are separated from the world, and consecrated to God after a more express and more holy manner, and by vows more solemn and more irreverfible than the *Nazarites* themselves were formerly; and that these vows particularly bind them to live in temperance and great sobriety, and to distinguish themselves from other men by pure and exemplary lives. The blessing which the priests pronounced over the people of *Israel*, is still in use in the Christian church. It is an excellent form of prayer, teaching us that the favour and blessing of God is the fountain of all our happiness; that we ought incessantly to implore that blessing, as well for ourselves as others; and that the ministers of the Lord, especially, ought to pour out their constant prayers for the people they are set over.

C H A P.

C H A P. VII.

THIS chapter specifies the several offerings made by the heads of the tribes of *Israel*, at the setting up of the tabernacle, and the dedication of the altar.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are informed in this chapter, that besides the offerings made by the children of *Israel*, with so much chearfulness and liberality towards the building of the tabernacle, the heads of the tribes gave a remarkable instance of their zeal, in offering a great quantity of vessels of gold and silver, as well as beasts for the sacrifices, when the tabernacle was finished and the altar dedicated. The evangelical worship requires not oblations of this nature, nor such large expences; but Christians are bound to dedicate their substance with great zeal, to advance the cause of piety and religion, and to relieve those who are in necessity and exposed to sufferings.

C H A P. VIII.

THIS chapter contains, I. The command concerning lighting the lamps in the tabernacle. II. The ceremonies observed in the consecration of the *Levites*, who were chosen by God instead of the first-born of the children of *Israel*, and were to serve in the tabernacle under the priests. III. At what age the *Levites* were to enter upon their office, and at what age they were to leave off serving in the tabernacle.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE design of these laws was to regulate the service of the tabernacle, and every thing relating to the worship of God, in such a manner, that all things might be performed with decency, and agreeable to the divine will. In the consecration of the *Levites*, there are chiefly these three ceremonies remarkable; I. That they were consecrated by washings and purifications, that it might appear their office was very holy. II. That they were presented to God by the chief of the people, who laid their hands upon the head of the *Levites*, to signify that they were appointed instead of the first-born of all the people, whom God saved alive when he destroyed the first-born of the *Egyptians*. And lastly, that the *Levites* presented victims, which were sacrificed, after they had laid their hands upon their heads; by which ceremony they acknowledged themselves likewise to be sinners, and that their sins must be expiated, in order to be set apart for the service of God. The age of the *Levites*, who were admitted to minister before the Lord, was from five and twenty to fifty years old, because their functions required strength and vigour. What we are to infer from this chapter with respect to the Christian church, is, that since the office of pastors and ministers of *Jesus Christ* is spiritual, and much more holy than that of the *Levites*, it requires great purity and peculiar gifts; and that none should be admitted to this office but such as are in a condition worthily to discharge it.

C H A P. IX.

I. **T**HE *Israelites* keep the passover in the wilderness, the year after they came out of *Egypt*; and as there were some among them, who, by reason of
 some

some uncleanness, could not celebrate it at that time, God gave commandment that those who could not observe it at the usual time, should do it the following month. II. We here see how God led the people in the wilderness by the cloud, which was a token of his presence.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

ON this chapter we may make these four reflections:
 I. That as the *Jews* kept the passover, in the manner that God had appointed; we also should inviolably observe all the divine ordinances, and particularly those that relate to the service of God. II. That if those who were only outwardly defiled, were not allowed to keep the passover, those who have defiled themselves with sin, are much less fit to present themselves before God, and especially to partake of the Lord's supper. III. It is to be observed, that those who could not keep the passover at the set time, by reason of some legal uncleanness, were ordered by God to do it the following month, after they had purified themselves. This shews, that all the divine institutions are to be exactly observed; that we may not dispense even with the external duties of religion, when God has expressly required them; and that if we are not fitly disposed for the discharge of them, it is our duty immediately to endeavour to attain the necessary dispositions, purifying ourselves by repentance. Lastly, That if it was a glorious advantage to the *Jews*, to be led by the cloud in the wilderness, which was to them a symbol of the divine presence; we have in *Jesus Christ* our Lord a much more express pledge of his presence and favour, and are much more happy in being guided by the light of the gospel, which shews us the way wherein we are to walk during our stay in this world, in order to arrive at the joys of heaven.

C H A P. X.

THIS chapter consists of three parts. I. The command God gave about making the silver trumpets, which were to call the people together when they were to go to war, and on their feast-days. II. The order in which the people of *Israel* journeyed from the wilderness of *Sinai* to go to *Paran*, with the ark of the covenant before them. III. That *Hobab*, brother in law to *Moses*, who had accompanied them to that place, was going to leave them, but *Moses* entreated him to stay with them. *Moses* also sets down the words which were pronounced when the ark set forward, and when it stopt, in the several encampments of the people.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE rules for calling of the people of *Israel* together, were given to prevent disorder in their assemblies, in their marches, and in their feasts; and above all, to lead them to acknowledge their absolute dependence upon God, who was their protector and guide. This is the reason why the ark of the covenant was carried before them, and why *Moses* made use of the words mentioned in this chapter, when the ark set forward, and when it stopt. We ought likewise to acknowledge it our glory and our security, to have God present with us, and to live under his care and protection; that we can expect happiness from him alone, by following the guidance of his holy word, and living always as in his sight. *Moses* desired *Hobab* his brother in law, the son of *Raguel*, otherwise named *Jethro*, who had accompanied him for some time, not to leave them; promising to do him good when they were come into the land of *Canaan*. The company of prudent and godly men
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is a blessing, which we cannot seek for or preserve with too much care; and therefore we ought to endeavour to keep up a strict union with them; and be ready with pleasure to impart to them the advantages which God bestows on us.

CHAP. XI.

MOSES gives an account of two murmurings of the children of *Israel*: first, when they complained of the fatigue of their journey; for which God consumed some of them by fire; the second, when they asked flesh; which so afflicted *Moses*, that he desired God to ease him of the burden of that people; but God ordered him to take unto him seventy men; that he might impart of his spirit unto them. After this he sent quails for the people; but, to punish their murmurings and lustings, he destroyed a great number of them.

REFLECTIONS.

ST *Paul* teaches us the use we ought to make of this history; when he tells us, that these things are examples for us, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as the children of *Israel* also lusted. To this general reflection we must add these four particular ones. I. Their longing after the provisions of *Egypt*, and their distaste for manna, is a warning to us not to despise the favours which God has bestowed upon us, nor prefer earthly things before heavenly. II. *Moses*, hearing the murmuring of the *Israelites*, was so grieved at it, that he begged of God to discharge him from his office; but God, to comfort him, put his spirit upon seventy men, whom he appointed to assist *Moses* in his office; and besides that, promised to manifest his power in giving the children of *Israel* flesh to eat. The servants

of God may be discouraged, when they meet with contradiction, and men rebel against God; but it is a trial which they ought to overcome, and God, in his great goodness, always proportions his assistance to their necessities. III. The answer of *Moses*, when they told him that *Eldad* and *Medad* did prophesy in the camp; and his wish, that all the Lord's people were prophets, teach us not to envy the blessings that God bestows upon others; but, on the contrary, to rejoice as often as we see the glory of God promoted, either by ourselves or our neighbours. Lastly, Let it be observed that God, to stop the murmurings of the people, who asked flesh, sent them quails in great abundance; but that after they had eat of them, God destroyed a great number of the murmurers. God sometimes in wrath grants men their petitions; and the accomplishment of their wishes is often the means of their punishment.

C H A P. XII.

AARON and *Miriam* murmuring against *Moses* their brother, because he had married a *Midianitish* woman; God reproves them for it, and smites *Miriam* with leprosy; but heals her again at the request of *Moses*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE may here consider, I. That *Moses*, who had been so often exposed to the murmurings of the people, was now exposed to those of his own brother and sister; which shews us, that good men are often exposed to crosses and trials, even from those who ought to comfort and assist them. II. That God thought fit on this occasion to confirm the authority of *Moses*, by preferring him before all other prophets; and by punishing *Miriam* with leprosy. III. That

III. That *Moses* prayed for *Miriam*, though he was so much injured by her; and that it was on account of his prayers that she was healed. This is a proof of his great meekness, and teaches us to return good to those that do us evil, and to pray for them; and to be far from wishing them evil, or doing any to them. This likewise proves; that the intercession of pious and charitable men appeases the wrath of God, and engages him to return with his grace and favour.

C H A P. XIII.

THE people being come to the borders of *Canaan*, *Moses* sends into it twelve spies, who brought back word that the country was very fruitful; but ten of them discouraged the people from going thither.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IT was God's pleasure *Moses* should send spies into the land of *Canaan*; that the people of *Israel* might be encouraged to go and inhabit that country, which was so fruitful; this was an instance of the divine goodness towards them. But the people, intimidated by the report of ten of the spies, were discouraged; and disregarded all that *Joshua* and *Caleb* could say to encourage them to go into the land of *Canaan*, and the promise God had made them of giving them that country. Such is often the ingratitude and incredulity of men; when God would pour his favours upon them, they will not lay hold on them. The behaviour of the *Israelites*, and of those spies who disheartened the people, is a lively representation of the sentiments of those, who, instead of encouraging themselves in their duty, and endeavouring to overcome the difficulties they meet with in their way

to heaven; lose courage themselves, and discourage others too; fancying those difficulties to be invincible, and the duties of holiness beyond our strength. But *Joshua* and *Caleb* are like those zealous persons, who do not suffer themselves to be carried away by the multitude, but cleave steadfastly to God and to their duty, and are not discouraged at the prospect of any difficulties they may meet with, any conflicts they are to undergo.

C H A P. XIV.

I. **T**HE children of *Israel* being disheartned by the ten spies, murmur against *Moses*, talk of returning into *Egypt*, and threaten to stone *Joshua* and *Caleb*; at which God was so provoked, that he was going to destroy the people; but by the prayer of *Moses* was prevailed upon to pardon them; he declared, however, that all those who came out of *Egypt*, from twenty years old and upwards, should not enter into the land of *Canaan*, but should die in the wilderness, except *Joshua* and *Caleb*, who alone should enter into it. II. God slew the ten men who had caused the people to murmur: and the children of *Israel*, seeing the Lord was wrath with them, would go out against the *Canaanites*, tho' *Moses* forbade them; but were defeated.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE must consider here the sin of the *Israelites* in rebelling against *Moses*, as they had done so many times before; and his love to them, which induced him to intercede for them; and the punishment God inflicted upon them for their sin. All the *Israelites* that came out of *Egypt*, above twenty years old, actually perished during the forty years they were in the wilderness, except *Joshua* and *Caleb*, who

who entered into the land of Canaan. But since *Eleazar* the son of *Aaron* did likewise enter in, as we read *Josh.* xiv. 1. and xxiv. 33. it may be doubted whether the priests and Levites, who were not numbered with the people, were included in this punishment. The chief reflection we are to make upon this history, is, that as the unbelief of the *Jews* was the reason they did not enter into the land of Canaan, but died in the wilderness; we ought to fear likewise, lest our unbelief should hinder us from entering into heaven. This reflection is thus expressed by the apostle: *To day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, as those who sinned and whose carcases fell in the wilderness; and to whom he swore in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest.* So we see that they could not enter in, because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it: let us therefore labour to enter into that rest, lest any of us fall by the same example of unbelief. The punishment that God inflicted upon the ten spies who had disheartened the people, and the promise he made *Joshua* and *Caleb*, that they alone should enter into the land of Canaan, shew us, that those who are the occasion of offence, and draw others into sin, shall receive the punishment due to it; but that God is kind, and blesses those that are faithful to him. Lastly, The ill success that the children of *Israel* had when they would go and engage with the *Canaanites*, shews us, that whatever is undertaken against the will of God can never succeed.

IN the first part of this chapter, God gives directions concerning the meat-offerings, and

drink-offerings which were to be offered with all their sacrifices, both by the children of *Israel* and by strangers; and commands them to make an heave-offering of the first of their dough. II. He prescribes the manner of atoning for sins committed by ignorance. III. He orders, that those who sin presumptuously should be put to death; which command was then executed on the man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath-day. IV. God orders the *Jews* to put fringes to the borders of their garments, that they might always remember the law of the Lord.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E former part of this chapter, which treats of meat-offerings and drink-offerings, sacrifices and oblations, suggests to us two reflections: One is, that which *St Paul* makes in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, where he says, that they then offered gifts and sacrifices, which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, which could not purge the conscience, and were to subsist only till the time of reformation, that is, till the coming of *Jesus Christ*. In this dispensation we should acknowledge, on one hand, the divine wisdom in appointing ceremonies suited to the state of the *Jews*, and well adapted to teach them the duties of piety and gratitude to their maker; and on the other, the excellence of that worship prescribed in the gospel, and the perfection of *Christ's* sacrifice. The other is, that strangers were likewise admitted to offer their sacrifices; which intimated, that they were not intirely excluded from the grace of God; and that the time would come, when they should be received into covenant with him. From the second part of this chapter we learn, that there is a difference between sins committed through ignorance, and wilful sins; that altho' the first are not so great as the

the other, yet God still considers them as real sins, for which we ought humbly to sue for pardon, and heartily repent of them. As for those sins that are committed wilfully and obstinately, they are certainly much more enormous, since no sacrifices could atone for them, but they were punished with death; which was the case of the man that had gathered sticks on the sabbath-day. This proves that deliberate sins, and such as are contrary to the positive commands of God, are very great. This is St Paul's reflection on this occasion, when he says, *That if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin; and that if those who despised Moses's law, died without mercy; such as shall trample under foot the son of God, will be thought worthy of a much sorer punishment.* The law concerning the fringes that the Jews were to wear upon their clothes, was to put them in mind never to depart from the commandments of God; and we are likewise to learn from thence always to have the law of the Lord before our eyes, and to frame our lives in conformity to it.

CHAP. XVI.

I. K O R A H, Dathan, and Abiram, raised a rebellion against Moses and Aaron, with an intent to rob them of their authority, and take the priesthood upon themselves; but God destroyed the rebels in a miserable manner. II. After this example of divine vengeance, God ordered them to take the censers of those who had rebelled against Moses, and were consumed by fire, to the number of two hundred and fifty, and to make with them plates to cover the altar of burnt offerings; to be a memorial of this event. III. The people again murmuring, God destroyed

stroyed fourteen thousand and seven hundred of them.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE history of the sedition raised against *Moses* and *Aaron*, by *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, and of the terrible punishment God inflicted upon them, and those that were joined with them, is very remarkable: the earth opening and swallowing up the former, and fire from heaven consuming the latter. This severe vengeance, which confirmed the authority of *Moses* and *Aaron*, shews also that every one ought to abide in his calling, and submit himself to the order that God has established; that none ought to assume to themselves the honour of the ministry, nor exercise its functions, unless God has called them to it; and that those who disturb the peace of civil society, or the order of the church, by setting themselves up against those whom God has placed in authority over them, strive against God himself, and expose themselves to his vengeance. We are likewise informed in this history, that *Moses* endeavoured to appease the rebels, and did by his prayers avert the wrath of God, which was kindled against all the congregations; which was a proof of the meekness of this great prophet, and of his love to those who had rebelled against him. Thus ought we, instead of fretting and wishing evil to those who injure us, to labour to bring them back to their duty, and intercede with God for them. We have seen likewise, that the people, instead of growing wiser by what had happened to the rebels, murmured again the next day against *Moses* and *Aaron*, and drew upon themselves a punishment more terrible, and more general than ever. This is an instance of the unaccountable stupidity of that people, and shews us that when people do not grow better by the first corrections.

rections, God sends greater upon them; and that he does not only punish the authors of disorders and offences; but likewise those who suffer themselves to be drawn away to do evil by the instigation and evil examples of others. Add to this, that these severe judgments were necessary to awe such a people as the *Israelites*, and keep them to their duty.

C H A P. XVII.

GOD confirms, by a miracle, the choice he had made of *Aaron* and his family for the exercise of the priesthood; and the people, terrified and affrighted, acknowledge their sin in murmuring against *Aaron*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

AFTER God had vindicated the authority of *Aaron's* ministry, by punishing those who had set themselves against him, he was pleased to confirm it again by a new miracle, which must needs have made a deep impression upon the people of *Israel*. He was pleased likewise that *Aaron's* rod, which had budded, should be preserved in the tabernacle, in the most holy place, to perpetuate the memory of this event. From whence we may learn, that it is in no case lawful to oppose the divine ordinances; that we must submit to those whom God has established the governors of his church; and that no one ought to oppose them, nor usurp their offices; nor in general disturb that order which God would have reign in the church and in the state.

C H A P. XVIII.

GOD commands that the Levites should be joined to the priests, for the service of the tabernacle; and

and provides for their subsistence in the following manner. They were to possess no lands, but the priests were to have for themselves and families the oblations and the first fruits, and other things offered in the tabernacle; and the Levites were to have the tithes, upon condition they would give to the priests the tenth part of those tithes,

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are informed in this chapter in what manner God regulated the offices of the priests and Levites, and how he provided for their subsistence. The tribe of *Levi* had no part nor inheritance in the land of *Canaan*, as the other tribes had; but had for their share the tithes of the whole country; and the priests in particular had their portion of the sacrifices and offerings, and a tenth part of the tithes. By this means, the ministers of religion were supported in a comfortable and decent manner, without being forced to neglect the duties of their function to provide for the necessities of the body. This proves that, in the Christian church, provision should be made for the maintenance of those that serve in the sacred ministry, as *St Paul* teaches, *They which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple; and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar; even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*

C H A P. XIX.

THIS chapter contains the ceremonies that were practised in the sacrifice of the red heifer, which was burnt, in order to make with its ashes a water to be sprinkled upon the unclean to purify them.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE reflection which St Paul makes, in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, on what we read in this chapter, is, *that if the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh; much more shall the blood of Christ purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* To which let us add, that if God commanded the *Jews*, upon pain of death, to purify themselves according to the ceremonies here prescribed; those who neglect to cleanse their souls from real uncleanness, even the pollution of sin, are still less qualified to have any communion with him.

C H A P. XX.

WHAT is related in this and the following chapters, happened towards the end of the forty years which the children of *Israel* spent in the wilderness. In this chapter *Moses* gives an account, I. Of the death of his sister *Miriam*. II. Of the miracle wrought by God, in causing water to come out of a rock to appease the murmuring of the people, and what at that time happened to *Moses* and *Aaron*. II. The *Edomites* refusing to let the *Israelites* pass through their country; and lastly, the death of *Aaron*, who was succeeded by his son *Eleazar*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

MOSES informs us in this chapter that the *Israelites*, after so many mercies received from God, and so many chastisements inflicted on them, relapsed, in the wilderness of *Zin*, into their former murmurings; and that God in his great goodness did, notwithstanding their base ingratitude, give them
water

water after a wonderful manner. Thus do men harden their hearts, and slight the mercies and despise the corrections of the almighty; and thus does he, in his abundant goodness, still bear with them and do them good. We have seen likewise that *Moses* and *Aaron* were both excluded from the land of *Canaan*, for not having faith enough upon this occasion, tho' they had wrought a like miracle before at *Repidim*. God punishes the want of faith even in the faithful themselves; and though he pardons their infirmities, he does not always exempt them from temporal punishments; which he does for their own good and advantage, and to make them examples to others. The *Edomites* refusing to let *Israel* pass thro' their country, tho' they were descended from the patriarchs by *Esau*, *Jacob's* brother, shews, that the *Edomites* began already to look upon the *Israelites* with a jealous eye. The *Edomites* were almost ever after enemies to the people of God. However, the *Israelites* did not, on this occasion, make war upon them, because they looked upon them as brethren, and because God had given the *Edomites* the country which they inhabited.

C H A P. XXI.

IN this chapter begins the account of the *Israelites* wars with the *Canaanites*. I. Their first war was with king *Arad*, whom they conquered. II. *Moses*, next gives an account of their murmuring, and being punished by fiery serpents. III. The people passing thro' several places destroyed *Sibon* king of the *Amorites*, and *Og* the king of *Bashan*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are two things to be observed in this chapter: I. We see in the children of *Israel* victory

victory over king *Arad*, over *Sibon* king of the *Amorites*, and *Og* king of *Basban*; that the promise God had made of giving them the land of *Canaan*, began to be fulfilled even whilst *Moses* lived. II. From the history of the fiery serpents, we may observe, on one hand, that as the *Israelites* fell again into their old sin of murmuring, they drew upon themselves new plagues; by all which God destroyed by degrees the whole generation that came out of *Egypt*, and which was not to enter into the land of *Canaan*. On the other hand, the wonderful manner in which the people were healed of the biting of those serpents, by means of a brazen serpent, must needs convince them that it was God who had sent among them the fiery serpents, and that he alone was their deliverer from them. But above all, this history ought to bring into our minds the words of our Lord: *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of a man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*; and what *St Paul* says, *Let us not tempt Christ, as the Israelites tempted, and were destroyed of serpents*.

CHAP. XXII.

I. **B**ALACK king of *Moab*, alarmed with their victories, sends for *Balaam* to curse the children of *Israel*; which *Balaam* at first refused to do, because God had forbid him. II. But the king having sent for him a second time, *Balaam* being tempted by his promises, enquires of God what he should do: God does not hinder him going to the king of *Moab*; but to convince him that his journey displeased him, he opened the mouth of the ass he rode upon, and sent an angel to oppose his journey. III. *Balaam* being arrived in the country of the *Moabites*, was received by *Balak* with great marks of honour.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS history furnishes us with several reflections.

The first is, that *Balaam* had the knowledge of the true God, and that God revealed himself to him, tho' he lived among idolators, and was himself a wicked and a covetous man. God, who sometimes endues wicked men with his gifts, in order to bring about his designs, was pleased to make use of *Balaam* as an instrument to preserve the knowledge of the divine Being in the country where he lived. II. We must take notice of the covetousness and hypocrisy of *Balaam*; who, as God had forbid him to go to the king of the *Moabites*, and he had protested that he would not transgress the commandment of the Lord; ought not to have consulted God any more about it; but he being tempted by the promises of *Balak*, applied to God a second time. Thus do sinners resist the will of God, and seek after means to gratify their passions: and thus are covetous men, in particular, capable of doing any thing to satisfy their ruling passion. III. It is to be observed, that God seeing *Balaam* was desirous to go to the king of *Moab*; let him alone, though he did not approve of the occasion of his journey. When God has sufficiently informed men of his will, if they will afterwards resist him, and endeavour to blind and seduce themselves; he does not hinder them from doing what they are bent upon; but however, they can do nothing but what he permits. IV. God's sending an angel, and miraculously forming in the mouth of the ass sounds like those of the human voice, tended to surprize him, and convince him of his sin and rebellion, as *St Peter* remarks in the second chapter of his second epistle. Lastly, We see that *Balaam*, being terrified, would have gone back again; but that God ordered him to continue his journey: which was done
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because the prophet had obeyed only through fear, and because God would make use of him to bless his people. Let us learn from hence, that God accepts of no forced obedience; that when sinners embark in undertakings contrary to his will, he does not prevent them in spite of themselves; but makes them, contrary to their own intention, subservient to the execution of his purposes.

C H A P. XXIII.

BALAAH having twice offered sacrifices, blesses the people of *Israel* each time, instead of cursing them, as *Balak* had desired; at which that prince being incensed, carries the prophet to another place, in hopes of making him curse the people from thence.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE may observe from this chapter, that although *Balak* used his utmost endeavours to make *Balaam* curse the children of *Israel*; and though *Balaam*, allured by the promises of that prince, would have been really glad to do it, yet God did not permit him; but, on the contrary, obliged him to bless them. This is an example, which shews, that God does always rule over the wicked; that he does not suffer them to do his children that harm which they desire; nay, that he makes use of them to do them good. *Balaam's* repeated blessings, and all that he said in favour of the children of *Israel*, should have convinced the *Moabites* that they were the favourites of heaven, and that nothing can hurt those whom God loves and designs to bless.

C H A P. XXIV.

I. **B**ALAAH bleſſes the people of *Iſrael*, a third time, and foretels their great proſperity. II. He advertiſes *Balak* what was to happen in the laſt days to the *Moabites*; and to other nations.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

LET it be conſidered, in the firſt place, that God thought fit *Balaam* ſhould go on to bleſs the *Iſraelites*, and foretel the privileges and glory of this people, in order to intimidate the *Moabites* and the reſt of their neighbours, and by that means facilitate their conqueſt of the land of *Canaan*. II. We ſee in the ſequel of this hiſtory, that the attempts of the wicked againſt the children of God, are not only ineffectual, but that they often turn to their own ruin, and to the advantage of the faithful. Of this we have a remarkable example in *Balaam*; ſince, inſtead of curſing the children of *Iſrael*, as the king of the *Moabites* had deſired, he bleſſes them, and foretels the deſtruction of the *Moabites* themſelves. As for the reſt, the prophecies of *Balaam* concerning the people here mentioned, import, that a great king, of the ſeed of *Iſrael*, that is *David*, ſhould deſtroy the *Moabites* and the *Edomites*; that the *Amalekites* ſhould likewiſe be deſtroyed; that the *Kenites* ſhould be carried away into captivity by the *Aſſyrians*; that afterwards the *Aſſyrians* ſhould be conquered by thoſe of *Chittim*, that is to ſay, by the *Macedonians*; and that at length they alſo ſhould be ſubdued, which accordingly happened by the *Romans*. All theſe prophecies are remarkable, becauſe they inform us of that which was to happen to all theſe people ſeveral ages after.

C H A P. XXV.

THE daughters of the *Moabites* having, by the advice of *Balaam*, drawn the children of *Israel* into the sins of uncleanness and idolatry, God punishes them for it, destroying them in great numbers; and as *Phineas* had shewn his zeal upon that occasion, God promises the priesthood to him and his posterity.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT we have been just now reading, leads us to consider, that the children of *Israel*, whom the *Moabites* could not hurt, nor *Balaam* curse, were drawn into idolatry by the daughters of the *Moabites*, and by their own sensuality, and by that means exposed to the wrath of God. This teaches us, that we have more to fear from our passions, than from the malice of our enemies; and that it is a very dangerous thing to suffer ourselves to be seduced by voluptuousness, and the desires of the flesh. This is the application which *St Paul* makes of this history, when he says in the first epistle to the *Corinthians*, *These things are written, to the end that we should not commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.* The zeal that *Moses* and *Phineas* shewed on that occasion, in slaying, by the commandment of God, those that had defiled themselves with uncleanness and idolatry, and God's rewarding *Phineas*, prove, that we must zealously oppose, by all just and lawful means, those that offend God openly; that this is in particular the duty of magistrates, and the ministers of religion; and that God rewards the fidelity of those who thus express their zeal for his glory.

C H A P. XXVI.

THE children of *Israel*, a little before the death of *Moses*, are again numbered, according to their tribes and families; the number of those who were taken into the account from twenty years old and upward, was six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty men; and the *Levites* twenty three thousand.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **G**OD would have *Moses* take the number of the children of *Israel* before his death; that in the division to be made of the land of *Canaan*, where they were shortly to enter, every tribe might have a portion assigned it, suitable to the number of persons which it contained. II. Their numbers were much the same as they were forty years before, when they came out of *Egypt*. The people did not multiply during the forty years they sojourned in the wilderness; because God, during that time, destroyed all those who came out of *Egypt* above twenty years old; so that all the men of vigor dying in the wilderness, and not growing old, their number could not increase. This *Moses* acknowledges in the ninetyeth psalm.

C H A P. XXVII.

I. **A** Man, named *Zelophebad*, dying without male-issue, his daughters, fearing they should have no part given them in the land of *Canaan*, when the land was divided, came to *Moses* and *Eleazar*, and entreated that the inheritance, which would have fallen to their father had he lived, might be given unto them. Upon which God gave command, that
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when a man had no sons, his inheritance at his death should pass to his daughters. II. *Moses* appoints *Joshua* to succeed him after his death.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE reflection we are to make upon the law which God gave concerning the daughters of *Zelophebad* is, that God designed by this means to preserve the distinction of families and inheritances among the *Jews*, and to cause the daughters to inherit what of right belonged to them; from whence we may learn, that no one ought to be deprived of his right of inheritance, but that we ought to give to every one that which belongs to him. We see the zeal and piety of *Moses*, as well as his love to the *Israelites*, in his prayer to God to give them a ruler to succeed him after his death. And the command which the Lord gave *Moses* to appoint *Joshua*, to present him before the priest, and before all the congregation, and to lay his hands upon him, is a mark of the care God took of his people *Israel*. Thus ought we to pray God to raise up good governors both in church and state, and to bestow his gifts on those whom he calls to so important an office.

C H A P. XXVIII, XXIX.

THE twenty eighth and twenty ninth chapters treat of the sacrifices, of the meat-offerings and drink-offerings, which were to be offered by the *Jews* in the continual burnt-offering, which was presented to God every day, morning and evening; and in the sacrifices of the sabbath, of the new-moon, of the passover, and of pentecost; with those on the feast of trumpets, on the day of atonement, and in the feast of tabernacles.

REFLECTIONS on chap. xxviii, xxix.

THÉ laws contained in these two chapters being, except in a few circumstances, only a repetition of those we read in the twelfth and twenty ninth chapters of *Exodus*, and in the twenty third chapter of *Leviticus*, the reflections to be made on them may be seen at the end of those chapters. These laws, which were given forty years before, God thought fit *Moses* should repeat before his death, by reason of their great importance. What we are here particularly to observe on the twenty eighth chapter, is, that the first days of every month were dedicated to acts of religion. *St Paul* observes, that this, as well as the other festivals of the *Jews*, are abolished under the gospel. But, if Christians are no longer obliged to observe these, they ought still to preserve the spirit and design of them, which is, to dedicate to God the whole time of their lives, and to preserve the remembrance of all his mercies.

C H A P. XXX.

THIS chapter treats of vows, whether made by man or woman; and here God appoints how they shall be kept, and how far vows made by virgins, married women, widows, and by women divorced, should or should not be binding.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter concerning vows teaches us two things: I. That God required the *Jews* religiously to observe their vows and oaths; and therefore, that we are obliged before God to keep with the greatest exactness all lawful vows, and that nothing can dispense with the obligation of them.

them. II. That rash vows, and such as we have no right to make, may be revoked in certain cases, provided it be done by those who have a proper right and authority to do it. It appears also from this chapter, that God would not have the authority of fathers and husbands infringed in the least degree.

C H A P. XXXI.

THIS chapter contains the history of the war which the children of *Israel* made against the *Midianites*, and of the victory they obtained over them. This victory was very considerable, as well as the spoil which was taken from the enemy, of which we have here a detail. This spoil was divided between the soldiers and all the people, after a portion of it was first dedicated to the Lord.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THREE things are chiefly observable in this history: I. That the *Midianites*, who were enemies to the *Israelites*, were overcome; and particularly, that *Balaam* was killed among them, as well as the women who had seduced the children of *Israel*. This was a just judgment upon the *Midianites*, and upon *Balaam*; and the death of that prophet, by whose counsel the daughters of *Midian* had enticed the *Israelites* into idolatry and uncleanness, shews, that God punishes those that are the occasion of other mens sins. II. The great spoil which was taken from the *Midianites*, was divided, by God's command, between those who went to the war, and those that remained in the camp; which was a very just law. III. As God commanded the officers of the army to offer to him what they had taken from the *Midianites* of the greatest value; we ought to

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give God the glory of all our good success, and to devote to his honour and service all the good things we enjoy, all the advantages which he has vouchsafed to us. There is one remarkable circumstance in this history; which is, that the *Israelites* lost not one single man in the engagement; which was a very extraordinary proof of the divine protection and assistance. Further, this victory contributed to render the children of *Israel* very powerful, since they were delivered by this means from a very formidable enemy, and were greatly enriched by the spoil; which helped to make the conquest of the land of *Canaan* easier afterwards.

C H A P. XXXII.

THE *Jews* of the tribe of *Reuben*, and of the tribe of *Gad*, intreated *Moses* to give them the country that had been conquered beyond *Jordan*; which *Moses* granted them, upon condition they would assist the rest of the tribes in conquering the land of *Canaan*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are two observations to be made upon this chapter: I. The first relates to the distribution which was made to the two tribes and a half, of the country beyond *Jordan*. By this *Moses* might see before his death that the promises God had made his people, to give them the land of *Canaan*, were beginning to be fulfilled; and that the other tribes would infallibly possess all that was on the other side *Jordan*. II. The second observation is, that God ordered the two tribes and a half to assist in conquering the land of *Canaan*, for the nine other tribes, who had helped them to subdue the country which was fallen to their lot. From whence
we

we may learn, that we ought to observe the strict rules of justice in every respect, and assist one another; and in general, that Christians, being all brethren, ought to assist each other to the utmost of their power.

C H A P. XXXIII.

I. **I**N this chapter we have an account of the several journeys and encampments of the children of *Israel*, during the forty years they were in the wilderness. II. God commands them to destroy the *Canaanites* and their idols, and divide the land of *Canaan* by lot.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE several journeys of the children of *Israel*, mentioned in this chapter, were agreeable to the will of God, since the cloud which accompanied them directed them in the way they were to take, and where they were to stop. II. During the forty years they were in the wilderness, they often changed their abode, having made in that time two and forty encampments; because, being so very numerous, they could not have long subsisted in the same place with their flocks. III. The sacred history relates only what happened in the beginning and at the end of the forty years; by reason the most considerable events of that part of the history of this people happened just after their coming out of the land of *Egypt*, and a little before their entering into the land of *Canaan*, and the death of *Moses*.

C H A P. XXXIV.

I. **M** O S E S, by the command of God, settles the borders of the land of *Canaan*, which remained unconquered on the other side *Jordan*. II. He orders that country to be divided to the nine tribes and a half, and names the persons who were to make the division.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I T is something very remarkable, that before the children of *Israel* had begun to conquer the land of *Canaan*, which was on the other side *Jordan*, *Moses*, by divine inspiration, settled exactly the bounds of that country. This is an evident proof of the sovereign power of God, who thus disposed of a country which the *Israelites* were not yet in possession of; but of which he would soon make them masters. II. The obedience of *Moses* to the command of God, making known his will to the *Israelites*, is a proof of his faith, and of his firm persuasion that God would give them the land which he had promised to their fathers. III. God appointed, before the death of *Moses*, the persons who were to make the division, to prevent the confusion and disputes which might arise, if it had not been regulated. He ordered that this should be done under the direction of *Eleazar* the high priest, and *Joshua* successor of *Moses*, by the deputies and heads of every tribe. In all this God acted as their supreme Lord and master; which engaged them to respect every thing that was done on this occasion as proceeding from God himself.

C H A P. XXXV.

I. **G**OD commands, that forty eight cities be appointed for the Levites to dwell in; out of which, six were to be chosen for cities of refuge to such as should accidentally kill any one. II. He most expressly forbids them, upon any pretence whatsoever, to suffer those to live who had been guilty of wilful murder; and gives them rules how to judge in the case both of wilful and accidental murder.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

GOD's appointing cities for the Levites to dwell in, expresses the care he took of the ministers of religion; whence we ought to conclude, that God would have us provide for the maintenance of those that serve the church. The laws concerning murderers are a lesson to all, and especially to judges and magistrates, that wilful murder is a crime which ought to be avenged. God does here expressly, and several times, forbid to let a murderer live, or to take any ransom for his life. He declares, that the impunity of that crime, draws a curse upon the country where it is committed; and that there shall be no atonement for that land, where the shedding of blood shall be suffered to go unpunished: which ought to beget in us an extreme horror for murder, and every thing that leads to it; as it proves likewise, that princes and magistrates have no authority to acquit wilful murderers. As to involuntary and accidental murder, for which God had appointed cities of refuge, the laws of God on that head shew, that such murder ought not to be punished; that in general, every thing that is done involuntarily, and without our fault, does not render us guilty either before God or man.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXXVI.

BY the law contained in this chapter, it is ordained, that those daughters who should inherit the possession belonging to their family, should be obliged to marry in their own tribe.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE law contained in this chapter was given as an explanation of that set down in the twenty seventh chapter of this book, concerning the daughters of *Zelophebad*, who were admitted to enjoy their portion in the inheritance of their tribe. They came to *Moses*, and asked him, whether, if these daughters should marry into another tribe, those estates would pass to that tribe? Upon which God commanded, that, in such case, the daughters should marry in their own tribe. But this regarded only those daughters who inherited estates in land; others might marry out of their tribe; of which we have some examples in the sacred history. The design of this law was to prevent confusion of tribes and inheritances; as the distinction of families and tribes was to subsist till the coming of the Messiah.

The end of the fourth book of MOSES, called
NUMBERS.

THE
FIFTH BOOK OF MOSES,
CALLED
DEUTERONOMY.

ARGUMENT.

The fifth book of Moses is called Deuteronomy. This word signifies a second law: and this book is so called, because it is a repetition of the laws which God had given forty years before to the children of Israel, after their coming out of the land of Egypt. It pleased God that Moses should repeat these laws before his death, because those that had heard them the first time, were all dead in the wilderness. Besides this, we read in this book several beautiful exhortations, which Moses addressed to the children of Israel before his death.

CHAP. I.

MOSES mentions, I. The way which the children of *Israel* had taken when they came out of the land of *Egypt*. II. The appointing of judges and magistrates over the people. III. Their departure from *Horeb* and arrival at *Kadesh-barnea*, and what befel them when they rebelled against God, after the spies had been sent to view the land of *Canaan*; and in what manner God punished their rebellion.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE repetition that *Moses*, by God's command, made of what had happened to the *Israelites*, and of the laws which God had given them, was designed for the instruction of that people; and shews, that he would always have us remember his favours and commands. II. It appears from this chapter, that it is agreeable to the will of God, and very necessary to keep up order in a society, that there should be magistrates and judges; but this trust should be committed to men of great integrity, who discharge their office conscientiously, and do justice to every body, without respect to persons. III. *Moses* reminds the *Israelites* of the rebellion of their fathers, and of the punishment inflicted on them, that they might learn by this example not to rebel as their fathers had done. This recital should have made the greater impression upon them, as the threatnings denounced on that occasion were accomplished; for of all those who were alive at the time of that rebellion, and came out of *Egypt*, there were none remaining except *Joshua* and *Caleb*. St *Paul* shews us the use we ought to make of this history, when he tells us, in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, that as the murmurings and rebellions of the children of *Israel* made God swear they should not enter into the land of *Canaan*; so we should take care that we be not excluded, by our unbelief and disobedience to the gospel, from the heavenly *Canaan*; and from that rest which is reserved for the people of God.

C H A P. II.

MOSES relates, I. The passage of the children of *Israel* along the borders of the *Edomites*, *Moabites*, and *Ammonites*; and God's forbid-
ing

ing them to treat those people as enemies. II. Their victory over *Sibon*, king of the *Amorites*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE may make two reflections upon this chapter :

I. That when the children of *Israel* passed along the borders of the *Edomites*, *Moabites*, and *Ammonites*, and they refused them a passage, God forbade the *Israelites* to do them any harm, because they were of the same original; the *Edomites* being descended from *Esau*, the brother of *Jacob*, and the *Moabites* and *Ammonites* from *Lot*, *Abraham's* nephew. Another reason why God would not suffer the *Israelites* to treat these people as enemies, was, because he had given them the country which they inhabited. Whence we may observe, that we ought never to revenge ourselves, nor make war unjustly, nor take away from others that which belongs to them. II. The second reflection is, that the children of *Israel* subdued the king of the *Amorites*, and took his country, by the divine assistance; whereby they might discover the truth of the promises which God had made them, of giving them the land of *Canaan*, and be assured that he would soon put them in possession of all the rest of that country.

C H A P. III.

THIS chapter contains three things: I. The victory of the children of *Israel* over *Og* the king of *Basban*. II. The giving to two tribes and a half the country that had been conquered beyond *Jordan*. III. The prayer of *Moses*, beseeching God to suffer him to go into the land of *Canaan*; which God refused to grant.

REFLECTIONS.

IT has been already remarked, on the twenty first and twenty second chapters of *Numbers*, that God began to put the *Israelites* in possession of the land of *Canaan*, by their victory over *Og* king of *Basban*, and by giving his kingdom, and that of the *Amorites*, to the two tribes and a half. But what is most remarkable here, is the earnest request of *Moses*, that he might go into the land of *Canaan*, and God's refusing to grant him that favour, because *Moses* had not expressed a sufficient degree of faith, when he fetched water out of the rock. God does not always hear the prayers which we offer up to him for temporal blessings; and though he pardons those whom he loves, as he had pardoned *Moses*, he thinks fit sometimes to punish them in this life, for certain sins which they have committed, both to humble them, and to give them a more lively sense of their sins, and for the example and instruction of others.

C H A P. IV. 1—20.

I. **M**OSES exhorts the people to keep the laws of God; to remember the punishments they were visited with when they fell into idolatry and worshipped *Baal Peor*, the idol of the *Moabites*; and to consider well the advantage they enjoyed above other nations, in being governed by laws so just and holy as those which God had given them. **II.** He relates what happened at the giving of the law; and forbids, above all things, the making any image of the godhead, or worshipping the creatures.

REFLECTIONS.

MOSESES, after he had recounted the mercies and judgments of God upon the *Israelites*, exhorts them to fear him. This teaches us, that whether God afflict or bless us, it is only to engage us to serve him. II. That motive to obedience, which *Moses* pressed upon the children of *Israel* with so much evidence, representing to them the glorious privilege they enjoyed above all other nations, in having God for their protector, and in knowing his holy laws, should be well considered by us. His words are, *What nation is there so great, whose gods are so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is unto us in all things that we call upon him for; and which hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law which he has given us?* These words, applied to Christians, have still greater force; since God has so gloriously distinguished them, not only from all other people in the world, but even from the *Jews*; and they have the advantage of being guided by the divine and holy laws of the gospel, given them by the son of God; and therefore are under still greater obligation to keep those holy and righteous laws. III. It appears from this chapter, that we are forbidden not only to worship false gods, but even to represent the true God by any image. Which engages us to abhor idolatry, of what kind soever it be; to bless God for making known to us the true way of worshipping him; and to serve him faithfully in spirit and in truth, as he requires of us.

C H A P. IV. 21—49.

I. **M**OSES goes on to exhort the *Jews* to avoid idolatry after his death; and solemnly declares, that if they forsook God, they would be driven out of the land of *Canaan*, and scattered over the whole earth; assuring them, however, that God would not forsake them utterly. II. He sets before their eyes, in a most affecting manner, the favour of God towards them, in chusing them for his people, in giving them his law, and working so many miracles for their sakes. III. He appoints three cities of refuge, according to the command of God, in the country that had been conquered beyond *Jordan*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

LET us seriously reflect on what *Moses* said to the children of *Israel*, to turn them from idolatry, and induce them to keep the Lord's commands; particularly remembring that grave and solemn manner in which he called heaven and earth to witness against them, that if they departed from their duty, and the worship of God, they should certainly perish, and be scattered throughout the world; in such wise, however, that if they improved under the chastisements of the Lord, he would still have mercy upon them. We see likewise with what evidence, with what majesty, and with what meekness, this holy prophet called upon the *Jews* to consider the advantage they had enjoyed in hearing the voice of God, and seeing all those wondrous works which he had done for them. These exhortations, which should have made great impressions on the children of *Israel*, ought to affect us much more, who are chosen by God to be his true people; who have heard his voice, not as heretofore, from mount *Sinai* out of the midst of the fire,
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but by his Son *Jesus Christ* ; who have experienced the wonderful effects of his powerful love, vastly surpassing those which they *Jews* experienced. If after all this we should neglect or despise these inestimable advantages, and forsake the Lord our God, and disobey his commands, we cannot think to escape the severest punishment. These are the reflections which we ought to make in the most serious manner ; and that we may call them to mind, we should frequently read and meditate on the excellent exhortations contained in this chapter.

C H A P. V.

I. **M**OSES repeats the ten commandments of the law, which had been published about forty years before upon mount *Sinai*. II. He tells them how exceedingly their fathers were terrified at the time of publishing it.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HIS repetition of the law in the presence of all the people, shews, that it was the will of God, that it should be preserved and kept inviolably in all ages. There is some difference in the manner of expressing the fourth commandment, in this and the twentieth chapter of *Exodus* ; here *Moses* says, that the sabbath day was also appointed to give rest and refreshment to their slaves, and to put them in mind that they themselves had been slaves in *Egypt*. *Moses* adds this as a more particular explanation of God's design in this commandment, which was intended to preserve the remembrance of their deliverance from *Egyptian* bondage, as well as of the creation of the world. This law, which *Moses* repeated, concerns Christians as well as it did the *Jews* ; wherefore we ought reverently to regard it, and observe its precepts, making it not only the rule of our

actions, but even of the thoughts and motions of our hearts. II. We see that the people of *Israel* were extremely terrified at the publication of the law. *St Paul* remarks upon this occasion, in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, that the curses and punishments denounced in the gospel are more dreadful than those of the law of *Moses*, and that *our God is a consuming fire*; which should fill us with great fear, and lead us to a sincere and uniform obedience. III. The promises made by the *Jews*, to keep the law of God, should move us to vow to him unfeigned obedience, and to perform, in a better manner than the *Jews* did, the vows and promises by which we are bound to his service. When the people had vowed obedience, God said to *Moses*; *They have well said all that they have spoken: O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always; that it might be well with them and with their children for ever!* These words deserve our utmost attention. From hence we clearly learn, that nothing is more acceptable to God than our obedience; that he desires nothing but to load us with his favours, and make us happy; and that it is our own fault if we do not feel the effects of his love. It appears also from hence, that it is of no service to make good resolutions, if we do not persevere, and put them in execution.

C H A P. VI.

MOSES exhorts the *Jews* to keep the commandments of God; to love him with all their heart; never to depart from his word; to have his law always before their eyes; and above all, to teach it to their children, and to instruct them in the wonderful things that God had done for their fathers.

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R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE reading of this chapter teaches us, that since the God we worship is the only true God, our great and chief care ought to be to love him, to obey him, and to adhere inviolably to his word.

II. This chapter teaches us, that it is the duty of parents to instruct their children in the law and in the fear of the Lord; to teach them the histories contained in the holy scriptures, and to be always speaking to them of God's mercies, and of his holy commandments. By this means, God designed to preserve among the *Jews* the knowledge of himself and the true religion. If that people were obliged to the discharge of this duty, how much more are Christians, who cannot neglect the education and instruction of their children without being guilty of a great sin, and the greatest ingratitude to their God? Lastly, We should all of us learn from hence, to call to mind continually the mercies of God, and to have his commandments without ceasing before our eyes, that we may fear and love him. Herein, as *Moses* says, will consist our righteousness and our happiness, and our glory before God and man, if we take care to do all that the Lord our God has commanded us.

C H A P. VII.

THIS chapter consists of two parts. I. God commands the *Israelites* utterly to destroy the *Canaanites*, and their idols. II. *Moses* promises them, that if they obey the law of the Lord, he will bless them, and put them in possession of the land of *Canaan*, notwithstanding the number and strength of the *Canaanites*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. **F**OR the right understanding of the first part of this chapter, we must know, that God commanded the children of *Israel* to destroy the *Canaanites*, to the end that abominable people, whose corruption was at the height, might be punished, and removed out of the world; and to hinder them from drawing away the *Jews* into iniquity: It was for the same reason that he forbade his people to make any alliances with those nations. From whence we may draw this instruction, that God does at last destroy nations, when their wickedness is without remedy; and that we should be afraid to have any dealings with the wicked, lest we be involved in their sins, and in their punishment. II. Let us seriously consider the earnest exhortation of *Moses* to the *Jews*, to be an holy people, devoted to the Lord; and the assurance he gave them that God would bless them if they continued faithful to him, and would make them masters of the *Canaanites* and their country. God has chosen us to be his people, that he might engage us to fear him. This should be our chief care; and to this end, we should always remember, that, as *Moses* says, the God whom we worship is a mighty God and faithful, who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments; but repayeth them that hate him to their face, and will not let their disobedience go unpunished.

C H A P. VIII.

I. **M**OSE\$ represents to the *Israelites*, how God had protected them, and the wonders he had done for their sake, while they were in the wilderness.

derness; and that he had likewise chastened and corrected them. II. Next he speaks to them of the riches and fruitfulness of the land of *Canaan*; and exhorts them not to abuse the plenty and prosperity which they were to enjoy in that country, lest they should feel the effect of the divine vengeance.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE instructions contained in this chapter are,
I. That as *Moses* set before the children of *Israel* God's favours and his corrections, to stir them up to fear him; so it is always very useful to meditate upon the mercies of God and the afflictions with which he visits us. II. The warning which *Moses* gave the *Jews*, to take care that the plenty and other advantages they should enjoy in the land of *Canaan* did not corrupt them, teaches us, that men easily abuse prosperity; that they forget God, and frequently fall into pride, disobedience, and ingratitude, when they are too much at their ease; and so force God to take from them that ease and plenty which they made so ill an use of. These exhortations of *Moses* should be well considered, that, whatever condition we are in, whether adversity or prosperity, we may express to God our submission, our love and gratitude. By this means shall we avert his judgments, and secure the continuance of his favour and protection.

C H A P. IX.

I. **M**OSE S represents to the *Jews*, in the strongest and most affecting terms, that tho' God had chosen them, and was going to give them the land of *Canaan*, it was not because they were better than other nations, but by reason of the covenant he had made with their fathers, and of the wickedness of the *Canaanites*. II. Upon which occasion he puts
M 3 them

them in mind of their rebellions; and particularly of the idolatry which their fathers had been guilty of in worshipping the golden calf.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE have seen in this chapter, how *Moses* put the *Israelites* in mind of the free choice that God had made of them; and of the sins whereby they provoked him to wrath on several occasions. The instruction this affords is, that it is to the mercy of God alone we owe all our happiness; and that, as *Moses* said to the *Jews*, it is not for our righteousness that God has chosen us to be his people, and has saved us; but of his good pleasure and pure mercy. This, which ought to be well considered, is a powerful motive to humility and gratitude. And as *Moses* put the *Jews* in mind of the great sin which their fathers had committed in worshipping the golden calf, and of the punishment God had inflicted on them for that sin, we should likewise frequently call to mind our sins, and the punishments that attended them, that we may have a more lively sense of our own unworthiness, and may not fall again into our former disobedience.

C H A P. X.

I. **M**OSES recites how God gave the second tables of the law, and renewed his covenant with the people of *Israel*, after the idolatry of the golden calf. II. He mentions the death of *Aaron*, and the calling of *Eleazar* and of the *Levites*. III. He exhorts them to love and fear God; to rebel no more against him; and to do good to all that are in affliction and distress, and even to strangers.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **I**N the first part of this chapter we find, that when the wrath of God was appeased by the humiliation of the *Israelites*, and by the intercession of *Moses*, he restored to them the tables of the law, renewed his covenant with them, and settled the priesthood and his service among them. The intercession of good men, and the repentance of sinners, appease the wrath of God, and engage him to renew his love to men, and do them good. II. The second part of this chapter contains many beautiful exhortations, and particularly this: *O Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, and to serve him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, keeping his commandments and his statutes which I give thee this day for thy good?* These words teach us, that the end which God proposes to himself in all that he does for men, and what he requires from us, above all things, is, that we should love him with all our heart, and with all our strength; that we should fear him, walk in his ways, and love all men without exception. This too is the end and design, and the sum of all religion, and of our whole duty, as our Lord *Jesus Christ* has declared in the gospel.

C H A P. XI.

I. **M**OSES continues to exhort the *Jews* to love and fear God; and to engage them to it, he puts them in mind of their deliverance out of *Egypt*, and of what had happened to them in the wilderness. II. He speaks to them of the fruitfulness of the land of *Canaan*; and promises them, that if they would obey the laws of the Lord, God would bless them in it; threatening them, on the contrary,

trary, with his wrath if they were disobedient. III. He charges them to have his law always before their eyes, and to teach it carefully to their children. Lastly, He sets before them the blessing and the curse of God; and orders them, when they were come into the land of *Canaan*, that they should pronounce the blessings from mount *Gerizim*, and the curses from mount *Ebal*.

R E F L E C T I O N S .

I. **T**HE design of this chapter, as well as of the former, is to induce the children of *Israel* to love and obey God, from the consideration of those deliverances that he had wrought for them, and of the punishments he had inflicted upon the rebellious in the desert; by the hopes of those blessings he would bestow on them in the land of *Canaan*; and by the fear of his wrath. If the *Jews* had reason to be affected with these motives, the consideration of the great deliverance that *Jesus Christ* has obtained for us, the hope of the joys of heaven, and the fear of the punishments of the next life, should affect us yet more, and incline us more strongly to love God and keep his commandments.

II. What *Moses* says in this chapter, in a very particular manner engages parents to instruct their children in the law of God, and to make it the subject of their frequent and ordinary conversation with them. The repeated commands of this nature, shew that this duty is of the utmost importance. Lastly, We should take particular notice of these words of *Moses*: *Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: a blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, and a curse, if you will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day.* The gospel does also set before us blessings and curses; blessings much more excellent, and curses more dreadful

ful than those proposed to the *Jews* by *Moses*; which should be a more powerful inducement to love and obey God, as he has commanded.

C H A P. XII.

I. **M**OSES commands the *Jews* to root out idolatry from the land of *Canaan*. II. He informs them, that when they were come into that land, God would choose a place where they might serve him with greater regularity than they could do in the wilderness; and forbids them to offer sacrifices or oblations any where but in the place that he should choose. III. He forbids the eating of blood, and imitating the *Canaanites* in their superstitions and idolatries.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE design of these laws was, to hinder the *Jews* from falling into idolatry, and the other sins of the *Canaanites*; to oblige them to serve God in the place and in the manner he had appointed; to take care for the maintenance of the Levites; and to shew their gratitude to him, by sacrifices, tithes, and other oblations. Christians may learn from hence, I. That God can be pleased with no other service than that which he himself has prescribed; and that we ought by no means to depart from it. II. That we ought not only to abominate all kinds of idolatry and superstition; but likewise to avoid all evil customs and evil examples; since it would not be less dangerous or less criminal to imitate men of corrupt lives in their manner of living, than to conform to the superstitious and idolatrous in their false worship.

C H A P. XIII.

MOSES commands, that those false prophets should be put to death, who endeavoured to turn away the people from the service of the true God; and orders the same punishment to be inflicted on private persons, and even against cities, that should tempt the people of *Israel* to idolatry.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **W**HAT is said in this chapter must be understood thus: If God, to try the *Jews*, should suffer impostors to arise and do false miracles, or extraordinary actions which might be looked upon as miracles, they were not to pay any regard to those signs and miracles; but to consider all those as seducers, who should attempt to draw them away to the worship of other gods; which was a sufficient proof that they were false prophets.

II. It must be considered that the law, which ordered those to be put to death, whether private persons or the inhabitants of any city in general, who should intice the people to idolatry, ought not now to be observed, because it was founded upon the particular state and constitution of the people of *Israel*, who had God for their king and supreme magistrate; so that they could not introduce idolatry, without rebelling against him, and subverting that form of government which he had established. So that what is said in this chapter by no means proves that idolators should now be put to death, or those who err from the truth, when the error does not concern the public happiness; nor disturb the order which ought to reign in societies. However, it appears from hence, that idolatry is a crime that cannot be sufficiently detested; that

that we should oppose such as draw away others into error and wickedness, by all possible and just means; and that we ought not to countenance wickedness in any respect, not even in our nearest relations. But if we ought not to make use of force and torment against idolators, or any others that are in error; the church ought to make use of instruction and discipline, and the other means that *Jesus Christ* has put into her hands, to hinder the spreading of false doctrines, to prevent scandals, to bring back such as are the authors of them, and to exclude them from the communion of *Jesus Christ*, if they are incorrigible.

C H A P. XIV.

I. **G**OD commands the *Jews* to be moderate in their mourning. II. He repeats the law concerning the distinction between clean and unclean beasts. III. He orders, that besides the tithes which the *Jews* were to pay to the Levites, they should bring the second tithes into the tabernacle; allowing, however, those that were far off, to turn them into money: but in the third year, the *Jews* applied those tithes to the Levites, and to the poor, in the places of their habitations.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are here to make three reflections: I. That if God forbid the *Jews* to afflict themselves for the dead, after the manner of idolators; Christians ought much less to be excessive in their mourning, or be sorry *as men without hope*. II. The reasons for the law concerning clean and unclean beasts, were taken notice of in the reflections on the eleventh chapter of *Leviticus*. As this distinction between clean and unclean beasts, is now
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abolished, the gospel teaching that no creature is to be accounted unclean; we may make use of all the creatures of God, provided it be with sobriety and thankfulness, and in such a manner as may give just offence to none; always exactly following the rules of temperance and Christian prudence. III. The frequent repetition of that law, which obliged the *Jews* to pay their tithes to the Levites, and to pay even the second tithes, shews, that it is the will of God that the ministers of religion, as well as the poor and needy, should be maintained; and that every one should contribute liberally and to the utmost of his power.

C H A P. XV.

I. **G**OD forbids the *Jews* to exact any debts of their countrymen in the year of release, which was every seventh year. II. Upon this occasion he recommends the poor to them; and orders how servants and slaves should be treated that year. III. He repeats the law concerning the first-born of beasts.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE design of the almighty in the law which obliged the *Jews* to take nothing from their brethren in the year of release, and to make their servants free, unless they were desirous to continue in their master's service; was to put the *Israelites* in mind that they had been slaves in *Egypt*, and that they were all equally God's servants, and that the rich should not oppress the poor, nor bring them into slavery. If the *Jews* were bound to the observance of this law, Christians are under a stricter obligation to treat their servants with equity and gentleness, and not to be too severe in exacting debts from

from those in necessity. In this chapter God does likewise most expressly command to take great care of the poor, and never to forsake them; and forbids in a particular manner giving way to distrust, or any suggestions of self-interest, which might incline us to neglect the duties here prescribed. He declares it is a crying sin to oppress them, or to leave them destitute of help; but that he will pour down his blessings upon those who have compassion on the miserable. These are powerful motives to a liberal and chearful exercise of charity. The *Jews* were forbid to make use of the firstlings of their cattle, because they were to be dedicated to God.

C H A P. XVI.

THIS chapter makes mention, I. Of the feasts of the passover, pentecost, and of tabernacles. II. Of the appointment and duty of judges and magistrates. III. In order to prevent idolatry, God forbids the planting of trees near the altars in those places where he was to be worshipped, as the idolators did in the places where they served their idols.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. THE reasons why the feasts of the *Jews* were appointed, have been already noted more than once. Let it be considered further, that if it pleased God the *Jews* should observe certain feasts, in memory of the great things he had done for their nation; Christians, who have received infinitely greater mercies from him, ought to celebrate the remembrance of them with greater zeal and devotion, not only at seasons appointed for that purpose, but at all times, and in all their ways; since the life of a Christian ought to be wholly dedicated to the

the glory of God and his service. II. This chapter proves, that judges and magistrates are of divine appointment; and that such as take those employments upon them, ought to do justice exactly and impartially, to take no bribe, nor have respect of persons. III. God's forbidding the *Jews* to plant groves, and make images after the manner of idolators, shews, that it is not sufficient to avoid idolatry, but that we must shun every thing that comes near it, or which might be to ourselves or others an occasion of sin or scandal.

C H A P. XVII.

- I. **G**OD commands that those *Israelites* who worshipped idols should be put to death.
 II. That in the decision of doubtful cases, the priests should be consulted, and their judgment followed.
 Lastly, He directs the manner of establishing kings, and shews their duty both in civil and religious matters.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS chapter furnishes us with these three considerations. I. That the law which commanded to put idolators to death, does not respect Christians, nor are we to conclude from thence that we ought to make use of severity and torments towards those who are in error; but that, however, we ought to oppose those who might draw us away from the true service of God, and from the obedience we owe to him; that those ought to be looked upon as seducers, and cut off from the communion of the church, by the exercise of discipline, as *St Paul* directs in the first epistle to the *Corinthians*, chapter the fifth; where he applies to this purpose these words of *Moses*, *Put away the wicked*

wicked from among you. II. The second consideration relates to that law which obliged the *Jews* to submit to the judgment of the priests, upon pain of death to those that refused to obey him. It must be remembred, that this law did not concern articles of faith, nor the doctrines of religion, since God himself had in his word so determined every thing that was to be believed and done in that respect, that no one durst in the least depart from that rule. But this law related to civil causes, in which it was necessary to submit to the priests, or to the judge who had authority to determine law-suits; which must have been endless, if private persons might, with impunity, have rebelled against those whom God himself had appointed to determine them. And thus ought we at this day to submit to judges and magistrates, and obey in the Lord our temporal and spiritual guides. Lastly, This chapter teaches us, that kings and magistrates ought not to think they have a right to exalt themselves above their brethren, to heap up riches, to live deliciously, or to oppress the people; but that their duty is to live within the bounds of moderation and humility; to govern the people with justice; and above all, carefully to read the law of God, to have it always before their eyes, and to conform themselves strictly to it.

C H A P. XVIII.

I. **G**OD regulates the portion which the priests and Levites, who ministred, were to have of the sacrifices and other oblations. II. He forbids them to imitate the superstitions of the *Canaanites*, and particularly, the consulting those that used divination. III. He promises to instruct his people by sending them prophets, and above all, by sending a great prophet, to whom it would be their duty to hearken. IV. Lastly,

IV. Lastly, **H**e gives directions how they should distinguish between true and false prophets.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **S**T *Paul* teaches us, that the law which regulates the dues of the priests in the offerings of the people, proves that it has always been the will of God, that those who serve in the sacred ministry of the church, should be maintained by the church. **II.** We may likewise observe here, that it is a great sin to consult those that pretend to divination, to make use of charms, and other superstitious rites; and that these crimes ought not to be suffered among those that know the true God. **III.** We find in this chapter a remarkable prophecy; which in the new testament is applied to *Jesus Christ*; that prophecy, in which God promised to send a great prophet, who was to make known to men the will of God, and to whom alone we ought to hearken. **IV.** The command given by God, not to listen to false prophets, shews us, that we must not believe that all those who say they are sent from God are so; but that God would have us try these teachers and their doctrines, by the test which he has given in his word. This too is what Christ and his apostles have particularly required of all Christians.

C H A P. XIX.

THIS chapter contains, **I.** The laws concerning the cities of refuge, and the manner of proceeding in the case of wilful or accidental murder. **II.** Those concerning the boundaries of possessions; and the punishment of false witnesses.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE learn from this chapter, I. That if God appointed cities of refuge for those who had killed any one innocently, and without malice or any evil intention, he would not have us let go unpunished, upon any pretence whatever, those who have been guilty of wilful murder. Therefore, magistrates and judges ought to make a strict enquiry into, and severely punish this sin, if they would not draw upon themselves and upon their people the divine vengeance. II. This chapter teaches us, that it is a crying instance of injustice to remove landmarks. III. The third reflection relates to witnesses. It is God's will that we should have recourse to witnesses, when the truth cannot otherwise be known; and he orders, that false witnesses should suffer the same punishment as would have been inflicted upon the person against whom they bore false witness. This law proves the authority that judges and magistrates have, by the law of God, to make use of witnesses, and to examine them upon oath, in order to discover the truth, which those that are summoned as witnesses are obliged to declare, that those who are found to be false witnesses deserve the most exemplary punishment; and that if they escape punishment from men, God will take vengeance of their perfidiousness and impiety.

C H A P. XX.

THIS chapter contains the military laws. We observe here, the priest's exhortation to the people when they were going to war; and how the people were to use the cities they besieged.

REFLECTIONS.

THE military laws contained in this chapter, deserve our observation. The priest's exhortation to the people, when they were going to war, tended to inform them, that they could not overcome their enemies without the divine assistance. We may from hence conclude, that God, who governs all things, is the giver of victory; and that, when wars are just and lawful, we may be secure of his protection. That law by which certain persons were excused from going to war, was made because it would have been hard and unreasonable for them to be deprived of those advantages which they had proposed to themselves, and for others to enjoy them; and because it was to be feared, that such persons, going to war against their will, might want courage. We next observe, that it was the will of God that war should be carried on with moderation and temper, sparing, as much as possible, the innocent. If the *Jews* were obliged to behave with this temper and moderation in their wars; much more ought Christians to use the same moderation, especially towards one another, and shew upon all occasions, that they are animated with the spirit of *Jesus Christ*, which is the spirit of meekness and charity.

C H A P. XXI.

IN this chapter, God regulates, I. The manner of atoning for murder, when he that committed it could not be found. II. Marriages with captives. III. The rights of the first-born. IV. The punishment of those that rebel against their parents. And lastly, The burial of criminals executed by the hand of justice.

REFLEC-

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE ceremonies that were to be observed in atoning for murder, where the author could not be found, and the prayer and solemn protestation which the magistrates were to pronounce upon that occasion, shew plainly, that judges cannot be too strict in discovering and punishing murderers, and that God will call them to an account if they neglect it. The laws concerning marriages with captives, and the right of the first-born, were intended to prevent the *Israelites* from giving a loose to their passions and humours, and to maintain justice and order in families. The law, which commanded rebellious children to be put to death, expresses the heinousness of that sin, and should make all children who are guilty of this sin fear the curse of God. Lastly, What God prescribed about criminals that were put to death, was designed to prevent their dead bodies from being devoured by beasts, or stinking above ground, which would have looked like barbarity, and have created horror. Upon this occasion we should reflect upon the profound humiliation of *Jesus Christ* our Lord, who was nailed to the cross. This is *St Paul's* reflection in the third chapter of the epistle to the *Galatians*, where it is said, *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: For it is written, Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree.*

C H A P. XXII.

THE laws contained in this chapter relate to things found; to modesty in apparel; to kindness, even towards beasts; to buildings; to the mixture of divers kinds; and to the punishment of married and single persons that are guilty of uncleanness.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE several laws teach us, I. That we are obliged honestly to restore to the owner any thing that we shall find. II. The law which forbids the taking in a bird's nest both the dam and the young ones, was given to teach the *Jews* humanity and tenderness. III. God forbids men and women to disguise themselves, and change the dress peculiar to their sex, as the idolators did; because it was inconsistent with the rules of decency and modesty, and might introduce licentiousness and impurity. IV. God commanded them to make battlements to the roofs of their houses, because their roofs were flat, and persons might otherwise have fallen from them. V. He forbade the mixture of divers kinds, to keep the *Israelites* at the greater distance from impurity and some idolatrous customs. VI. The bands and fringes which the *Jews* wore upon their garments, and which distinguished them from other nations, were designed to put them in mind that they were the people of God, and were to keep his law. Lastly, Every one ought to take particular notice of the punishments that God had appointed against single and married persons, who should be guilty of the sin of uncleanness; which proves that not only adultery, but simple fornication too, are great sins; that those who are guilty of them ought to be punished; and that they are obliged to make reparation by marriage, and all other possible means, for the evil they have done; which, added to the consideration of the punishments denounced against the unclean, ought to keep us from those infamous sins, and oblige us to live in great chastity.

C H A P. XXIII.

THE laws in this chapter relate, I. To certain persons who might not be received into the congregation of the Lord, nor put into any posts of civil power. II. To the cleanliness that was to be observed in the camp of the children of *Israel* when they went out to war. III. To fugitive slaves, impurity, and prostitution; to usury and vows; and lastly, to what it was, or was not lawful to take, in the possessions of others.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE may collect from this chapter, I. That if God, for particular reasons, excluded from the congregation of *Israel* those who had some defects in their person or their birth; those who are fallen into the pollutions of vice, ought much less to be esteemed members of the Christian church, nor will God receive such into his kingdom. II. A like reflection may be made upon that law which required cleanliness in the camp, because God was in the midst of them: True purity, which is that of the heart and life, is much more necessary; and the consideration of the divine presence, obliges us still more strongly to take heed, that the Lord behold in us no unclean thing which may offend him. If God would have cleanness and impurity banished from among the *Jews*, he must esteem it still more odious in Christians. III. The command not to deliver up a fugitive slave, respected the slaves of the neighbouring nations, who were treated with great cruelty and barbarity, and came to seek for refuge in the land of *Israel*, and were minded to dwell there. IV. The law which forbade the *Jews* to lend upon usury to

their brethren, but permitted them to take interest of strangers, was peculiar to the *Jews*. The duty of Christians in this respect is never to lend upon usury, to be just and equitable, and to exact the payment of what is lent with great moderation. With respect to vows, we are at liberty to make them, or not make them; but when we have made a vow, we are no longer at liberty whether we will accomplish it or no, unless the object of it be something unlawful. Lastly, The law which permitted them to pluck the ears of corn or the grapes in their neighbour's possessions, to satisfy their hunger, but forbade the carrying any part thereof away, tended, on one hand, to keep the *Jews* from covetousness, and too great an attachment to their own private interest, and on the other, to keep them from theft and injustice; and to prevent them, upon pretence that they were allowed to make use of what belonged to another, from abusing that liberty, and doing mischief to their neighbour's goods.

C H A P. XXIV.

LAWS concerning divorces; the privileges of new-married people; the manner of taking pledges, and exacting the payment of debts; the punishment of men-stealers; concerning lepers; the wages of labourers; equity in judgments; and the care that was to be taken of the poor in the time of harvest.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

UPON the law of divorces, we must observe, that it did not authorize all those disorders which were introduced among the *Jews* afterwards; since God permitted divorce only when the woman had been guilty of something infamous and dishonest.

But

But we must remember what our Lord says in the gospel, that divorces were tolerated among the *Jews* by reason of the hardness of their hearts, but that they are no longer so among Christians, and that the bond of marriage cannot be dissolved. Next we learn, that we should not be rigorous in taking pledges, or when we make poor persons pay their debts due to us; that we should pay readily and honestly the wages of the hireling, and that it is a crying sin to withhold them; that we ought to use with kindness, as well as justice, strangers, widows and orphans. Lastly, The prohibition that God made the *Jews*, of gleaning their vineyards and their fields, was to teach them to avoid covetousness and a base attachment to their interest; and it teaches us, that God would have us remember the poor in the time of harvest, and to exercise charity towards them upon all occasions.

C H A P. XXV.

GOD commands the *Jews* to use moderation in the punishment of the guilty; forbids them to muzzle the ox that treads out the corn, commands that when a man dies without children his brother should marry his widow, to keep up the name of the deceased; he also commands them to use just weights and measures. And lastly, He orders them to destroy the *Amalekites*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we learn, I. That magistrates ought to pronounce just judgment, and punish the guilty with humanity and moderation. II. The law which forbids to muzzle the ox which treads the corn, was given to teach the *Jews* equity and tenderness; and to shew, that we ought to provide a maintenance for those who labour for the good of others, as

St Paul says in the ninth chapter of the first epistle to the *Corinthians*, where he quotes this law to prove, that they who preach the gospel have a right to receive from the church what is necessary for their provision and support. III. That other law which required, that, when a man died without children, his brother should marry the widow, was peculiar to the *Jews*; and was designed to keep up the distinction of families; and preserve the right of inheritance. IV. We see here, that those who are guilty of cheating, and especially those that use fraud and deceit in weights and measures, are an abomination to the Lord. Lastly, The command given by God to destroy the *Amalekites*, who had unjustly fallen upon the children of *Israel*, must be considered as a just punishment inflicted upon that people; and shews us, that pride, cruelty and injustice, are displeasing in the sight of God, and expose whole nations, as well as private persons, to his wrath.

C H A P. XXVI.

I. **H**ERE *Moses* prescribes the ceremonies that were to be observed by the *Israelites*, when they offered their first-fruits to God, and when they gave the tithes of the third year to the Levites, and to the poor. II. *Moses*, having set before them all these laws, exhorts the people to observe them, and to fulfil the promises which they then so solemnly made to obey the voice of God; he promises them, that if they did so, God would bless them, and make them the happiest people upon the face of the earth.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE reading of this chapter is very edifying and instructive. The prayers and solemn declarations

clarations made by the *Jews* when they presented their first-fruits and tithes, was a ceremony expressing their homage to the deity, and a grateful acknowledgment that to him they were accountable for all the fruits which their country produced. As they did, so should we pay homage to God for all the good things we possess, acknowledging our own unworthiness, and confessing that we receive all things from his bountiful hand. This ceremony of offering the first-fruits proves further, that God would have us express our piety and our gratitude by setting apart some portion of our estates, and offering it to him in humility; whether it be for his service, or for the support of the poor; taking care never to apply any part of our substance to sinful purposes, to provoke the God who gave them. We learn at the end of this chapter, that when the *Israelites* had solemnly promised to keep all the commandments of the Lord, and to walk in his ways, God also assured them they should be his peculiar people. We are obliged to observe all that God commands; but when we have made solemn vows and promises to do it, the obligation becomes still more indispensable; and it is by the practice of these just duties, that we can expect to secure to ourselves the favour of God and his blessing.

C H A P. XXVII.

I. **G**OD commands the *Israelites* to set up great stones upon mount *Ebal*, to engrave upon them the words of the law, to raise an altar there, and to offer sacrifices thereon. II. He orders them to pronounce the blessings from mount *Gerizim*, and the curses from mount *Ebal*; to which all the people were to answer, *Amen*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter is very remarkable for the blessings and curses which God commanded to be pronounced with so great solemnity, in the presence, and with the consent, of all the people of *Israel*. * This grave and solemn ceremony, leaves no room to doubt, but those who keep God's commandments are the objects of his favour and benediction; and that those who transgress them are accursed, and exposed to the divine vengeance. God thought fit those abominable crimes which are here set down, all of them crimes of the most heinous nature, and especially those of uncleanness, should be particularly mentioned, because they were common among the *Canaanites*, and were the very reason why God was going to destroy them; but let it be remembered, that other sins do no less expose us to the wrath of God. It is likewise to be observed, that these curses were denounced against those who committed these sins even in secret. Lastly, We should seriously consider, that, how terrible soever those curses were which were pronounced from mount *Ebal*, those denounced in the gospel are much more so; and that if the *Jews* submitted themselves to the wrath of God by answering *Amen* to every curse, we have likewise exposed ourselves to it, by the vows we have made to God as Christians; and that therefore we shall not escape his judgment, if we break those vows by our disobedience.

C H A P. XXVIII. †—44.

MOSSES having made an end of repeating and declaring to the people the laws of the Lord, promises them plenty, peace, and all sorts of blessings, if they obeyed God's commandments; and on the contrary,

contrary, threatens them with dearth, sickness, and war, and all the most dreadful miseries, if they fell into rebellion and disobedience.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IT is to be remarked in general on this chapter, I. That these temporal blessings and curses were suited to the state of the *Jewish* nation. II. That the curses are not mere threatnings, but so many express and formal predictions of the miseries that beset that people at different times, when they fell into disobedience and idolatry; God having visited them with barrenness, drought, famine, pestilence, and the sword, and with other scourges, as the sacred history informs us. III. Though these blessings and these curses related to the *Jewish* nation in particular, we ought most seriously to reflect upon them, and consider, that God blesses those that fear him, and punishes those that offend him, and abuse his goodness; that being Lord of all creatures, he makes them subservient to the welfare of his people; but that he afflicts and scourges the wicked; that war, famine, dearth, pestilence, diseases, and all other calamities, proceed from God; and that he frequently makes use of them to punish the iniquity and ingratitude of men. Lastly, We are to consider, that temporal blessings and curses are not those which should most affect us; but that as Christians we should serve and obey God in hopes of those rewards, and for fear of those punishments, that respect the life to come.

C H A P. XXVIII. 45—68.

THIS is a continuation of the curses denounced by *Moses* against the children of *Israel*, threatening them, that if they forsook God, they should be the most unhappy people under heaven; that God would

would deliver them into the hand of their enemies, and that they should be driven out of their country, and dispersed throughout all the world.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS is one of the most remarkable passages in the books of *Moses*: it presents us with a most exact description of the evils that afterwards befel the *Jews*, when they were delivered by God into the hand of their enemies; and in particular, when the ten tribes were dispersed by the king of *Assyria*; when *Jerusalem* was taken by the *Babylonians*, and the *Jews* carried away into captivity, and a great number of them retired into several parts of *Egypt*, and there perished in a miserable manner; and lastly, when the *Romans* destroyed their city and temple. We see here described the extremities to which the *Jews* would afterwards be reduced by famine; which was to be so great, that mothers would eat their own children; which came to pass in the siege of *Samaria* and *Jerusalem*. *Moses* foretels likewise the captivity of that nation; its dispersion over the world, and the sad condition in which it continues to this day. These predictions the antiquity of which is incontestible, and acknowledged by all, cannot be sufficiently admired; since they describe, so long before, what was to happen to the *Jews* after so many ages. These predictions prove, in the clearest and most express manner, the divinity of the writings of *Moses*; and ought to inspire us with a great fear of offending the Lord, lest we should incur those punishments and curses that are denounced in the gospel; and which are neither less certain, nor less dreadful, than those of the law.

C H A P. XXIX.

I. **M**OSES represents to the *Jews*, in a most affecting manner, the favours which God had shewn them. II. He renews the covenant between God and them. III. He solemnly protests, that if they broke it God would pour down upon them his most heavy judgments, and would make them an example to all the nations of the earth. This chapter, as well as the foregoing, deserves our serious attention.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS chapter represents how *Moses* before his death renewed the covenant between God and the children of *Israel*, and their posterity, exhorting them to keep it faithfully; and threatening them with total destruction, and the curse of God to fall upon them all, if they should break the vow and covenant which they then made. These weighty exhortations should make the greater impression upon us, as we know the *Israelites* actually fell into rebellion, and God fulfilled on them all the threatnings which *Moses* had denounced against them; that nation being driven out of the land of *Canaan*, and that country made a desolation and a curse. This engages us to remember, that God has been more gracious to us than he was to the *Jews*; that he has made with us a much more holy and more excellent covenant in *Jesus Christ*; that all of us have solemnly obliged ourselves to keep that covenant; and therefore if we should happen to fail in our duty, and in our promises, nothing can screen us from the punishment which God has so expressly denounced, and to which we have also made ourselves subject.

C H A P. XXX.

THIS chapter has three parts: I. *Moses* promises the *Jews*, that if they would humble themselves under God's corrections, he would pardon them. II. He tells them, that it was very easy for them to keep the law of God, since he had so clearly revealed it to them, and they had all necessary assistance to enable them to perform it. III. He calls upon them again to love and fear God, solemnly protesting, that if they should forsake him they would perish most miserably and most justly.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS chapter includes the following instructions: I. The promises God made the *Jews* of restoring them to his favour when they should turn again to him, shew, that God is full of goodness; that when he afflicts us, it is in order to humble us, and bring us to repentance; and that he is always ready to receive into the arms of his mercy, those sinners that make a right use of his corrections, and truly turn to him. These promises were fulfilled when God brought the *Jews* back from their captivity in *Babylon*; but they will be more fully completed when that nation, which still subsists, shall be converted. II. We learn from this chapter, that the law of God is very easy to be understood and practised; and that therefore we shall be without excuse if we break it. This is expressed in these words of *Moses*, which *St Paul* applies to the gospel, in the tenth chapter to the *Romans*: *This commandment is not too high for thee, nor too far from thee; but it is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart.* III. We should most attentively consider that serious
and

and solemn protestation of *Moses*, expressed in these words; *If thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not bear, nor obey the commandments of God; I declare unto you, that ye shall surely perish. I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live; that thou mayst love the Lord thy God, and cleave unto him, for he is thy life, and the length of thy days.* Nothing can be more expressive nor more affecting than these words of *Moses*. Thus does God, to engage men to love and fear him, give them warning of their danger, and set before them good and evil. It is therefore their own fault if they are not happy, and do not enjoy the effects of his love, and if they perish they are the authors of their own ruin and destruction.

C H A P. XXXI.

I. **M** O S E S promises the *Jews* the possession of the land of *Canaan*, and confirms *Joshua* in his calling. II. He ordains, that every seventh year the law should be read in the presence of all the people. III. God acquaints *Moses*, that after his death the children of *Israel* would rebel against him; and that then he should execute his threatnings against them. IV. He commands him to write a song, which might be a memorial of this prediction, to put it with the book of the law in the side of the ark of the covenant, and to pronounce it publicly before all the tribes of *Israel*, who were assembled together to hear it.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **M** O S E S, before his death, repeated the promises he had made to the children of *Israel*,
rael,

rael, assuring them again that they should enter into the land of *Canaan*, and that *Josiah* should bring them into it. This he did to encourage the people, and engage them to fear God. II. The command God gave to *Moses* to write the law, and to order the priests to keep it, and to read it before all the people, men, women and children, and even strangers, that they might learn to fear God, clearly proves, that it was necessary the word of God should be committed to writing; that it was designed by God to be read to the people, and that it is the duty of the ministers of religion, to communicate the knowledge of it to persons of every age, sex and condition; that the true service of God may be preserved free from any alteration. III. The predictions of *Moses* before his death, that the people of *Israel* would forsake God, and his solemn protestation against them in the song which he sung and left in writing, are an evident proof that God knows things to come, and that *Moses* was divinely inspired; especially if we consider, that all that this prophet foretold of the *Jews* has come to pass. This likewise leads us to consider, that those whom God has enlightned with his knowledge, and to whom he has shewn the greatest favour, do often corrupt his true worship, and rebel against him; but that he never suffers the disobedience and ingratitude of those who thus abuse his goodness, to escape unpunished.

C H A P. XXXII. 1—18.

THIS is the first part of the song of *Moses*; in which he describes, in figurative expressions, I. The mercies of the Lord to the children of *Israel*. II. The sins with which they had provoked, and would afterwards provoke, the Lord to anger.

R E F L E C-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS excellent song, which *Moses* made and wrote by the inspiration of the holy Spirit, as a solemn protestation to the *Jews* in after ages, and which will be, to the end of the world, an authentick proof of the divinity of the holy scriptures, ought likewise to serve for a warning to us. To this end we should consider, that if God expressed his great love to the *Jews* by separating them from other nations to be his peculiar people, and by granting them many signal mercies and deliverances, he has done much more for us than all this, in choosing us to be members of his church, and in pouring upon us his most valuable blessings in *Christ Jesus*. What is here said of the disobedience and ingratitude of the *Jews*, warns us not to make ungrateful returns to the goodness of the Lord, to use all the temporal and spiritual advantages we enjoy to his glory; but never to abuse his mercies as the *Jews* did, for fear of moving him to jealousy, and drawing upon ourselves the effects of his just vengeance.

C H A P. XXXII. 19—52.

THIS is the sequel of the song of *Moses*, in which he foretells, that God would cause his judgments to fall upon the *Jews*, by reason of their idolatry and other sins; that he would scatter them over all the earth; that the Gentiles should be called in their stead; that he would not entirely destroy the *Jews*, but would one day bring them back from their dispersion. *Moses* having finished this song, gives the people his last exhortations, and then, by God's order, goes up to mount *Neb*, where he was to die.

REFLECTIONS.

TH^{ERE} are here several things to be observed. I. *Moses* declares, that for the punishment of the sins of the *Jews*, God would deliver them to their enemies, and disperse them among the several nations of the world, and receive the Gentiles into covenant. The history of this people, and the condition they are in at this day, proves the truth of all that *Moses* had foretold, and shews, that when men provoke God's wrath, his threatnings are infallibly executed; and that those he has most loved, are most severely punished. II. *Moses* foretels in this song, that God would not entirely cast off his people; that he would again have pity on them, and display his power one day to all the world by their restoration. This happened when God delivered the *Jews* from the *Babylonish* captivity, and will be more compleatly fulfilled when they shall again be admitted into covenant with God. Lastly, The exhortations set down at the end of this chapter, should induce us to hearken diligently, and with reverential fear, to the laws of God, to have them always present to our minds, to teach them to our children, and to observe them inviolably; remembering that God gave them for our good and happiness, and that, as he says by *Moses*, the word which is spoken to us is not in vain; that it is our life; and that by it we shall prolong our days, and be compleatly blessed.

C H A P. XXXIII.

TH^{IS} chapter contains the blessing that *Moses* gave the tribes of *Israel* before his death.

REFLECTIONS.

ON the blessing which *Moses* gave the twelve tribes of *Israel* before his death, we observe in general, that this great prophet spoke to each of the tribes, not only with reference to what had already happened to some of them, but in such a manner as foretold what would happen to them afterwards, the condition they would be in, and the part of the land of *Canaan* where they should dwell; which proves that he spoke by divine inspiration. There is no particular blessing for the tribe of *Simeon*, because that was afterwards united with that of *Judah*, see *Joshua* xix. 1, 9. & *Chron.* iv. 24, and following verses. II. In this blessing we also observe the prophet's zeal for the glory of God, and his great love and tenderness for that people, whom he had taken such care of all his life; which should serve for an example to all those who are set over others, and particularly those to whom God has committed the government of his church, who ought, in imitation of *Moses*, to labour continually for the salvation of their brethren, and by their devout prayers and all other possible means contribute towards it. III. But it is also to be considered, that how great soever those blessings of *Moses* were, and notwithstanding the ardency of his prayers, they became vain, and unprofitable, by the disobedience of the *Israelites*, who were deprived of all the advantages that *Moses* wished them before his death. From whence we may learn, that though good men, and the faithful servants of God pray for men, and even God be ready to bless them, they may be deprived of the benefit of these prayers and blessings, if by their sins they will defeat them. Lastly, The words

of *Moses*, when speaking to the people the last time, he says, *Happy art thou, O Israel; what people is like unto thee!* ought to excite in us a lively sense of our own happiness in being the people of God, in a still more glorious and advantageous manner than the *Jews* were; they should inspire us with the most sincere gratitude towards God, and induce us to love and fear him, and glorify him by a constant obedience to his commandments, and by adhering inviolably to his service.

C H A P. XXXIV.

THIS chapter gives an account of the death of *Moses*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE death of *Moses* had this particular and remarkable circumstance, that he died in his full strength: this happy old age must be looked upon as a peculiar blessing vouchsafed by God to this holy man. But the most remarkable circumstance of all was, that God took him and buried him, and suffered not the place of his burial to be known. God thought fit this great prophet, who had so familiar an intercourse with him in his life, should, as *Enoch* and *Elias*, have something extraordinary and different from the rest of mankind in his death; that the children of *Israel* might be convinced that *Moses* left this world to go to God, and might look upon him as his faithful servant. As for us, it is our duty to honour the memory of this holy man, who was the deliverer and lawgiver of the people of God, and the greatest of prophets; and to reverence that law which he received from God, and which he has left us in writing.

ing. Besides which, we ought to follow the example of his virtues; and particularly of his faith and meekness, of that zeal and diligence with which the scriptures teach us he served God. Lastly, If we believe the doctrine of *Moses*, we ought to believe in him whose coming he foretold, and who is infinitely above him, by reason of the divinity of his person, the perfection of his doctrine, the glory of his miracles, and the holiness of his life; to wit, our Lord *Jesus Christ* the Son of God, to whom belong glory and praise for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The End of the FIVE BOOKS of MOSES.



THE
BOOK
OF
JOSHUA.

ARGUMENT.

In this book we see how the children of Israel conquered the land of Canaan, under the conduct of Joshua. This book contains the history of about seventeen years.

CHAP. I.

I. **G**OD confirms the calling of *Joshua*. II. *Joshua* orders the people to be prepared to go over the river *Jordan*. III. He commands the tribes of *Reuben*, *Gad*, and *Manasse*, who were already in possession of the country that was conquered in the time of *Moses*, to assist the other tribes in subduing the land of *Canaan*. The people promise an entire obedience to *Joshua*.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THIS chapter informs us, I. That after the death of *Moses*, God chose *Joshua* to be head over the children of *Israel*, and to bring them into the land of *Canaan*; and that he invested him with authority, and endued him with strength and wisdom

wisdom suitable to so great a work. From whence we may learn, that God never forsakes his church and his people; and that when he takes to himself his faithful servants, he raises up others in their stead, and endues them with the gifts of his holy spirit. II. The promise God made to *Joshua* not to forsake him, may be applied to all true Christians, as St *Paul* teaches in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, where he says, that it is our duty to rely upon providence, and be content in our condition; because God himself has said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*. But our confidence in God should always be attended with obedience to his laws, as is expressly taught in this chapter. III. The obedience paid to *Joshua* by the tribes of *Reuben*, *Gad*, and *Manasses*, who assisted their brethren in conquering the land of *Canaan*, should teach us to submit to our rulers, and to obey them; to assist one another in every just cause, and especially in what regards the glory of God, and the common salvation.

C H A P. II.

JOSHUA sends spies to *Jericho*, who lodged with a woman named *Rahab*, who concealed them, and informed them of the state of the land of *Canaan*. The spies promised to save this woman's life; and being returned to the camp, informed *Joshua* of all they had observed in their journey.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

UPON this chapter we may make these two principal remarks: I. That though *Joshua* was persuaded God would give the land of *Canaan* to the children of *Israel*, yet he sent spies to *Jericho*,

cho, to search the land, that their relation of the condition of the country might serve to encourage the people of *Israel* to invade the land of *Canaan*, and take proper measures to become masters of it. II. The second reflection relates to the conduct of *Rabab*; in which it is to be observed, that this woman being firmly persuaded that God had resolved to give the land of *Canaan* to the children of *Israel*, she might do what she did innocently; otherwise, her behaviour towards her king and country would have been very blameable, neither ought any to imitate her in that respect: her example should teach us to express the sincerity of our faith by our works, according to St *James*, who says, that *Rabab* was justified by works, when she received the messengers, and sent them out another way. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

C H A P. III.

I. **J**OSHUA commands the children of *Israel* to make ready to go over *Jordan*. II. All the people pass through the river on dry ground, the current of the waters being miraculously stopped.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

UPON this history of the passage of the *Israelites* over *Jordan*, we must make the five following reflections. I. That this miracle served to confirm the calling of *Joshua*, and strengthen his authority and credit among the people; since this was a proof that God would be with him as he had been with *Moses*. II. That God was pleased to give this people fresh proofs of his presence among them, and of his protection; and convince them, that he would assuredly give them the land of *Canaan*,
III. The

III. The resemblance between this miracle and that which had happened forty years before, when the *Israelites* passed through the Red sea, must needs call to their remembrance that great wonder which God had wrought for their fathers, and convince so much the more of the truth of that event those who had not been witnesses of it. IV. This event, which was known and must needs be observed by the inhabitants of the country, served to spread a terror among them, and by that means to facilitate the conquest of that country. Lastly, Observe, that as soon as the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant had touched the waters of *Jordan*, they stopped; whereby God gave the *Israelites* to understand, that it would be only by his assistance, that they should subdue the land of *Canaan*; and that in his presence in the midst of them, consisted all their strength and all their glory.

C H A P. IV.

I. **J**OSHUA commands the people of *Israel* to set up two monuments in remembrance of their passage through *Jordan*, one in the river *Jordan* itself; and the other near *Gilgal*; and to inform their posterity of this event. II. The people having passed that river, the waters returned to their ordinary course.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

GOD commanded the children of *Israel* to raise two monuments in remembrance of their passage through *Jordan*, which might serve afterwards to perpetuate the memory of this wonderful event, and prove the truth of it. We ought likewise to preserve and perpetuate the remembrance of the mercies of the Lord, and of his most signal favours, and especially

especially of what he has done for us in *Jesus Christ* our Redeemer. Moreover, we learn from hence, that it has always been the will of God that we should carefully instruct our children in the histories and truths of religion, that by this means they may be trained up betimes to love and fear God.

C H A P. V.

TH E R E are four things to be observed in this chapter: I The terror of the *Canaanites* at the approach of the *Israelites*. II. The circumcision of the people. III. The celebration of the passover. IV. The vision of an angel that appeared to *Joshua*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. TH E terror that seized upon the *Canaanites* when they heard the children of *Israel* had passed over *Jordan*, must be considered as a means made use of by God to intimidate them; wherein we see how God prepares things for the execution of his designs, and that he turns the hearts of men which way he pleases. II. It pleased God that the *Jews*, who had not been circumcised in the wilderness, should be so at their entrance into the land of *Canaan*; to shew them that they had the honour to be his people; that they had been gloriously distinguished from the *Egyptians*; and that he gave them that country on account of the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, and upon condition they would keep that covenant. It was for the same reason they celebrated the passover. From whence we may learn, that it is the will of God that all his ordinances, even those that relate only to external duties, should be strictly observed. III. The account we have of the manna's ceasing to fall as soon as the *Israelites* had eat of the corn of the land of *Canaan*, shews,

shews, that the manna, which they had eat till that time, was a miraculous food sent them from heaven, and that for the time to come the land should furnish them with the necessaries of life. Lastly, The angel's appearing to *Joshua*, was a new proof of the divine protection, and was designed to assure him, that as God had led the children of *Israel* by his angel in the wilderness, he would bring them in like manner into the land of *Canaan*, which he had promised them.

C H A P. VI.

THIS chapter contains the history of the taking the city of *Jericho*, in which these three things are to be remarked. I. The manner in which God delivered that city into the hands of the children of *Israel*. II. The command given to *Joshua* to destroy all the inhabitants except *Rahab*, and to take none of the spoil. III. The curse denounced against him that should rebuild that city.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

JERICHO, the first city which the *Israelites* took in the land of *Canaan*, was attended with this remarkable circumstance in the taking of it: it was not taken by force of arms; but the walls of the city were overthrown by the power and presence of the almighty, of whose presence the ark, which was carried in procession round the city, was a symbol. This first advantage which the *Israelites* gained over their enemies, was intended by the giver of all victory, to convince them that it was he who put them in possession of that country; and therefore, that they were to give him the glory of their success, and serve him faithfully. The manner of gaining this victory was designed likewise to convince the *Canaanites* that they who came against them did it in

in obedience to the commands, and under the protection and assistance of that almighty being whom they worshipped and adored. The next thing remarkable in this history, is the faith of *Joshua* and the priests, who did as the Lord commanded, not doubting but he would deliver the city into their hands: which made *St Paul* say, in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the *Hebrews*, that “by faith the walls of *Jericho* fell down after they were compassed about seven days.” God forbid the children of *Israel* to take any of the spoil of *Jericho*, and commanded them to dedicate it to him, as a testimony that they acknowledged him the author of this first victory, and of all other victories they should afterwards gain over their enemies. God commanded them to destroy the inhabitants of *Jericho*, and the rest of the *Canaanites*, by reason of their abominable wickedness; but *Rahab* was spared, as the spies had promised. The behaviour of the children of *Israel* towards this woman, is a proof that every one ought religiously to perform his vows and engagements, and that God never fails to reward the faith of those who trust in him. Lastly, It must be observed, that the curse denounced against the man who should rebuild the city of *Jericho*, was fulfilled six hundred years afterwards, in the time of *Ahab* king of *Israel*, as we read in the first book of *Kings*, chap. xvi.

C H A P. VII.

I. **T**HE *Israelites* are defeated before the city *Ai*, because a man named *Achan* had taken part of the spoil of *Jericho*, contrary to the command of God. II. *Achan* is discovered by lot, and stoned.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS history furnishes us with several useful reflections: I. In *Achan*, who, contrary to the most exprefs prohibition, took of the accursed or devoted thing, we have an instance of the fatal effects of the love of riches, and a proof that a fondness for the things of this world leads men into the greatest and most enormous sins; in short, that nothing is sacred to those who are slaves to this passion. II. The defeat of the children of *Israel* before *Ai*, occasioned by *Achan's* sacrilege, proves, that the sin of one man may bring down the curse of God upon the public; and that injustice and sacrilege deprive men of the divine protection. III. The wonderful manner of discovering *Achan* by lot, must needs have filled the people with dread; and is an evident proof, that though sinners may flatter themselves their secret sins shall never be discovered, they cannot possibly escape the knowledge nor the vengeance of the almighty, who will sooner or later punish the wicked. IV. The tragical end of *Achan* shews, that ill gotten goods are never long possessed; and that a curse attends the sacrilegious and unjust, and those who occasion public calamities. Lastly, This instance of severity must be considered as necessary to teach the children of *Israel*, that if they did not reverence the laws of God, they should never prosper; and to inspire them with fear at that time, when they were likely to be exposed to great temptations by their victories.

C H A P. VIII.

I. **T**HE *Israelites* take the city *Ai*. II. *Joshua* builds an altar upon mount *Ebal*, and causes the blessings and curses to be pronounced before all the

the people, as *Moses* had commanded before his death.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are three reflections to be made upon this chapter. I. That as soon as the children of *Israel* had punished *Achan*, and removed the accursed thing from amongst them, God delivered *Ai* into their hands. In this example we see, that as soon as men acknowledge their sins, and make due reparation, God restores them to his favour and protection. II. It must be observed, that God, who had delivered *Jericho* to the children of *Israel* by a miracle, and without their contributing any thing towards it, was pleased, that they should take the city of *Ai* by force; which shews, that they were to neglect no pains on their part, though they were secure of the divine protection. Thus ought we to trust in God, without neglecting at the same time the means which he has appointed. Lastly, *Joshua*, after he had gained these victories, caused the law to be written, and the blessings and curses to be pronounced as *Moses* had commanded. This he did in obedience to the command of God, and to engage the children of *Israel* to walk in the laws of the Lord; and to testify their thankfulness, at the time when his promises were fulfilling.

C H A P. IX.

I. **T**H E *Gibeonites*, terrified and affrighted, and fearing they should be treated as the inhabitants of *Jericho* and *Ai* had been, artfully contrived to make a covenant with *Israel*. II. When their artifice was discovered, *Joshua* and the rulers would not suffer the people to destroy them; because the
covenant

covenant had been confirmed by an oath; but the *Gibeonites* became bondmen.

R E F L E C T I O N S .

THIS history is well worth our serious attention. We find, that though the *Gibeonites* made use of falshood and lying, to induce *Joshua* to make a covenant with them; and though *Joshua* made this covenant without asking counsel of the Lord, and had even promised them something contrary to the general command God had given to destroy the *Canaanites*; yet as the covenant was made, and confirmed by an oath, he would not suffer them to be put to death when the fraud was discovered. An evident proof that promises are to be religiously observed, especially when an oath has intervened; and that the regard due to an oath, and the reverence we owe to that divine being by whose name we swear, lay us under an indispensable obligation to fulfil them, even when they are obtained by surprize and cannot be fulfilled without great prejudice to ourselves, provided they do not oblige us to any thing that is sinful. That what *Joshua* did upon this occasion, was agreeable to the divine will, and that he could not innocently have acted otherwise, is evident: for when king *Saul*, four hundred years afterwards, attempted to destroy the *Gibeonites*, and had even put some of them to death; God was so provoked at it, that he sent a famine upon the kingdom of *Israel*, which lasted three years; till it was removed by the death of seven of *Saul's* sons. Let it, however, be observed, that as the fraud of the *Gibeonites* deserved to be punished, and they had on other accounts just reason to suspect them, *Joshua* justly as well as prudently imposed servitude upon them. God would have every one religiously observe his oaths, and fulfil his promises; but then

he would have us to be upon our guard against those who are false and deceitful ; who if they escape in this world, will be punished in the world to come.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter contains the history of the defeat of the five kings that made war against the *Gibeonites*, because they had made a covenant with *Israel* ; and of several other victories gained by *Joshua* in the land of *Canaan*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this relation of *Joshua's* victory over the five kings, it must be observed, I. That *Joshua* undertook to defend the *Gibeonites*, strictly observing the covenant he had made with them ; and that God himself displayed his power against the kings who made war upon them : an evident proof that God approved of their keeping their engagements with the *Gibeonites*. II. That though he did not gain this victory without fighting, yet he obtained it by the particular assistance of the almighty, who upon that occasion wrought two miracles for them ; one was, destroying vast numbers of the *Canaanites* with great hail-stones ; and the other, making the sun stand still at the prayer of *Joshua*, to give him time to pursue his enemies. Thus all our success depends chiefly upon the divine assistance, and yet it is our duty always to join our own care and endeavours to our trust and confidence in God. This miracle, wrought at the request of *Joshua*, which is mentioned in the third chapter of the prophet *Habakkuk*, is a very extraordinary instance of the efficacy of faith and of prayer. We may conclude with this general reflection, that all *Joshua's* victories, and his speedy conquest of the land of *Canaan*, plainly shew
that

that God was with him ; and convince us of the truth of all the promises God had made to the children of *Israel* by *Moses*, that their enemies should not stand before them ; and that he would give them their country and their cities to dwell in. These great events prove, that God is faithful to his promises ; that he is almighty in the fulfilling them ; and that his blessing every where accompanies those that trust in him, and obey his commands.

C H A P. XI.

JOSHUA destroys several kings of *Canaan*, and a part of the *Anakims*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we are to observe, I. The wonderful effects of divine power, and the entire accomplishment of the promises of giving the land of *Canaan* to the children of *Israel*. II. When we read that the *Israelites* utterly destroyed the *Canaanites*, we must remember, that God commanded them to punish and destroy that abominable people, who were guilty of the most horrid crimes, and might have corrupted the children of *Israel*. This consideration sufficiently proves, that the destruction of the *Canaanites* was very just ; but it by no means follows, that what the *Israelites* did by express command from God, should countenance persecution, or cruelty and barbarity to our enemies in time of war.

C H A P. XII.

THE names of the several kings who had been conquered, and their country taken by *Moses* and *Joshua*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we see God, as he had long before at several times promised, putting the children of *Israel* in possession of the greatest part of the land of *Canaan*, the conquest of which was begun by *Moses* and compleated by *Joshua*. It appears from this book, that every considerable city and division of that country had its king, since there were no less than one and thirty kings vanquished: whom the *Israelites* subdued, not by their own sword, but by the assistance of the Lord of hosts, who blessed their arms, and wrought many wonders for them.

C H A P. XIII.

THIS chapter consists of two parts. I. An account of what still remained unconquered in the land of *Canaan*. II. The portion which the tribe of *Manasseh* had of the country on the other side *Jordan*, conquered by *Moses*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

GOD told *Joshua*, who was now an hundred years old, that there still remained some of the *Canaanites* to be destroyed, and that they would hold out some time longer, before they should intirely dispossess them. God did not think fit to put the *Israelites* at once in full possession of all the land of *Canaan*; because the *Israelites* could not have filled the whole country; and, as it is elsewhere observed, a great part of the country being uninhabited, the beasts of the field would have over-run them. He so ordered it likewise, to keep his people in awe, and chastise them by their means, whenever they forsook the Lord their God, as it often happened. However, afterwards, the remnant of the *Canaanites*, especially the *Philistines*, who a long time oppressed the

the people of God, were subdued, particularly in the reign of *David*.

C H A P. XIV.

I. **W**HEN the land was to be divided, *Caleb* applied for the city and territory of *Hebron*, which was given him, according to the promise God had made him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this history we have a very remarkable instance of the divine blessing upon *Caleb*, who had been sent with *Joshua* to view the land of *Canaan*, whilst *Moses* lived, and soon after their coming out of *Egypt*, and who had encouraged the *Israelites* to invade that country, whilst the rest of the spies discouraged them. God then promised *Joshua* and *Caleb*, that none but they should enter into the land of *Canaan*. And in truth, they were the only persons that did enter into it, whilst the rest of the people perished in the wilderness. *Caleb* attained to a good old age, being still in his full strength. God gave him the country of *Hebron*, and ordered that this recompence should descend to his posterity, and remain to future ages a monument of the faith and zeal of that holy man. Thus God blesses his faithful servants; and thus has godliness the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come.

C H A P. XV.

IN this chapter and the following, to the nineteenth, we are informed in what manner the country conquered by *Joshua*, after the death of *Moses*, was divided among the nine tribes and a half; what were the borders of each tribe, and the names of its

cities. The fifteenth chapter, in particular, describes the lot of the tribe of *Judab*, in which *Caleb* and *Othniel* had their portion. It appears, by the great number of cities and villages which fell to *Judab*'s lot, that this tribe was extremely powerful.

C H A P. XVI.

THIS chapter describes what fell to the lot of the tribe of *Ephraim*, and the half tribe of *Manasseh*.

C H A P. XVII.

THIS chapter continues the account of the tribe of *Manasseh*'s portion on this side *Jordan*. The children of *Ephraim* and *Manasseh* being very much streightened for room in the country that fell to their share, *Joshua* orders them to take in the land of the *Perizzites* and *Rephaims*, which, he assured them, they should become masters of.

C H A P. XVIII.

THE tabernacle is set up in *Shiloh*, where it remained about three hundred and thirty years, till the time of *Samuel* the prophet. *Joshua* orders a plan to be taken of that part of the land of *Canaan*, which was still to be divided among the seven tribes, who had not yet had their portion. This done, the division is made before God in *Shiloh*; and what fell to the tribe of *Benjamin* is here described.

C H A P. XIX.

THIS chapter describes the lot that fell to the several tribes of *Simeon*, *Zebulon*, *Issachar*, *Asher*,
Naphthali

Naphtali and *Dan*. When this division was made, they gave to *Joshua*, at the command of God, an inheritance, in which he built the city of *Timnathserah*, and dwelt there.

REFLECTIONS on chap. xv, xvi, xvii, xviii, and xix.

ON the division of the land of *Canaan*, we must make the following reflections. I. As the Lord had given this land to the children of *Israel*, it was divided according to his express command; that so every one might submit to what was determined by nothing less than the authority of God himself. For this reason the division was made at *Shiloh*, before the tabernacle, by *Eleazar* the high priest, and *Joshua*, and the rulers of the people, and the lot cast before God. II. It is worth notice, that the lot fell to several tribes just as *Jacob* and *Moses* had foretold. III. God was pleased the land should be divided among the tribes, while *Joshua*, *Eleazar*, and the elders of the people were living, to prevent disputes afterwards, and the tribes invading each other's property. IV. This too contributed to the security and defence of the country, as each tribe was concerned to defend its own property. Lastly, This division served to keep up the distinction of tribes, which was to continue till the coming of the *Messiah*.

C H A P. XX.

JOSHUA appoints six cities, as God commanded him, for places of refuge to them that had killed any one unawares.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE children of *Israel* appointed cities of refuge in the land of *Canaan*, in the manner

they had been directed by God. By this means, provision was made for the security of those who had been so unfortunate as to kill any one accidentally and without any ill design; and the relations of the person slain were prevented from avenging his death. It must, however, be remarked, that before the persons who had committed accidental murder were admitted into these cities, the judges were to take cognizance of the fact; and that, when they returned, after the death of the high priest, to their possessions, they were again to stand before the congregation, in judgment. Whence it follows, that as judges ought to protect the innocent, so they ought not to declare any one innocent, without good reason. It appears from hence, that in the case of murder, especially, magistrates ought to be particularly careful to get the most exact information, and use all the precautions possible to prevent a real murderer from escaping unpunished.

C H A P. XXII.

THE Levites applying to *Eleazar*, *Joshua*, and the chief of the people, for the cities which *Moses* had said should be given them to dwell in, they had assigned to them forty eight cities, with their suburbs.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE heads of *Israel*, when they assigned forty eight cities for the Levites, fulfilled the command of God by *Moses*. As the Levites had no portion in the land of *Canaan* as the other tribes had, it was but reasonable they should have cities to dwell in. By this means the Levites were dispersed through the whole country; which God designed, for the better instructing of the people and keeping them in order,

order, in obedience to his laws. The care God then took of his ministers, proves, that those of the Christian church ought likewise to provide for their spiritual guides, in such a manner, that no necessary subsistence may be wanting.

C H A P. XXII.

I. **T**H E tribes of *Reuben*, *Gad*, and the half tribe of *Manasseh*, returning into their own country, after they had assisted the other tribes to conquer the land of *Canaan*, built an altar near *Jordan*. II. The other tribes hearing of it, gathered together in order to make war upon them, imagining their brethren were going to establish a form of worship different from what God had prescribed. But when they found they had no such design, the war was soon put a stop to.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS history teaches us, I. That we should never be too hasty in condemning the actions of others from bare appearances; that some things appear criminal, which at the bottom are innocent; and that before we break the peace, and proceed to severity, we should take care to be well informed, and first make use of gentler methods. II. We have in this war, which broke out among the tribes of *Israel*, a proof, that quarrels on account of religion may be attended with very fatal consequences; that we should never fall out upon matters of small importance; and should always consider those as our brethren, who adhere with us to the true service of God, and hold the fundamentals of religion. Lastly, It appears from this history, that the *Israelites* of the two tribes and a half, and those of the other tribes, were all of them, at that time, sincerely attached to

the worship of the true God ; which was the reason they were so easily reconciled. This example teaches us, that we should not turn aside from the purity of religion, nor alter that worship which God has prescribed in his word ; and that when we are of the same sentiments about the essentials of religion, it is an easy thing not to disagree about the rest.

C H A P. XXIII.

JOSHUA being now very old, and drawing near his end, assembles the chief of the people, and exhorts them to keep the law of God, to serve him faithfully, and above all, not to have any intercourse or familiarity with the *Canaanites* ; and to shun idolatry : threatening their disobedience with the severest judgments.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

JOSHUA's exhortations to the children of *Israel* before his death, are a proof of his great zeal and piety ; an argument of his sincere affection for that people, and shew how much he had at heart the preservation of true religion among them after his death. Those who are appointed rulers of the people, should improve by so noble an example ; and learn from hence, that it should be their chief care and concern to support the cause of piety and religion in their own time, and provide for its support among those who come after them. These remonstrances of *Joshua* teach us likewise, that a firm adherence to the service of God, and obedience to his laws, is the only way to secure the happiness of a nation ; as, on the contrary, disobedience and ungodliness deprive men of the divine blessing, and bring God's judgments upon them.

C H A P. XXIV.

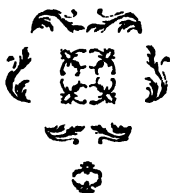
I. **J**OSHUA calls the people together again before his death ; and briefly recounts what had happened to their fathers and to them, from the calling of *Abraham* to their entering the land of *Canaan*. II. He renews the covenant between God and them, and engages them by the most grave and solemn protestations, and by repeated promises, never to forsake the service of the Lord their God. III. He erects a monument in memory of this renewal of the covenant : After which we read of his death, and of the death of the high priest *Eleazar*, the son of *Aaron*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **A**S *Joshua* reminded the *Israelites* of all that God had done for them, from *Abraham* and the time of the patriarchs, to their entering into the land of *Canaan* ; so Christians should continually call to mind the great mercies they have received from him, that by this consideration they may be inspired to serve him truly all the days of their life. II. These grave and solemn protestations which *Joshua* made to the children of *Israel*, asking them several times, whether they would serve God sincerely, with all their heart, engage us to consider, that as the service which God requires of us is reasonable and necessary, so should it be free and voluntary, and, as *Joshua* expresses it, we should choose the Lord for our God. God has made known his will to men, and shewed them what they must do to be happy ; that he is a jealous God, who will not leave rebellion and disobedience unpunished ; and therefore we ought seriously to consider what we are doing, when we solemnly engage to serve him faithfully. The reply the *Israelites* made

made to *Joshua*, and their repeated promises, declaring they would never forsake the Lord, and calling God to witness against them, if they failed in that fidelity which they then promised him; should put us in mind, that we have also engaged ourselves, by solemn and repeated promises, and upon pain of being rejected and forsaken of God, to serve him faithfully all our days. The last reflection to be made on this book is, that *Joshua* lived to a great age, and had the joy and satisfaction to see the *Israelites* in possession of the land of *Canaan*, and to leave them fully resolved to adhere to the worship of the true God. The *Israelites* served the Lord all the days of *Joshua*, and *Eleazar*, and of those who had been eye-witnesses of the wonderful works which God had done for that people; but after the death of *Joshua* they corrupted themselves. This shews, that the life of good men and true servants of God is of great importance; and the loss to the church is very great when God calls them hence.

The end of the book of JOSHUA.



THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

ARGUMENT.

The book of Judges contains the history of the children of Israel, from the death of Joshua to the time of Eli, who was the last judge; comprehending about three hundred years. The judges were persons raised up by God in an extraordinary manner, to deliver the people from their enemies, and to govern them.

CHAP. I.

I. **T**HE tribes of *Judab* and *Simeon* continue the war against those *Canaanites* that had not yet been conquered by *Joshua*; but did not entirely destroy them. II. The same happened in the countries belonging to the other tribes.

REFLECTIONS after reading the chapter.

THE first thing we learn from this book is, that God did not forsake the people of *Israel* after the death of *Joshua*; and that he continued to subdue the *Canaanites* unto them. However, he did not destroy them utterly; but in almost all the tribes, the *Canaanites* remained masters of some part
of

of the country. God so ordered it, that that people might be instruments in his hand, to chasten the *Israelites* whenever they should offend him. This was actually the case several times, as we find by the book of *Judges*. There is one particular reflection to be made upon *Adonibezek*, whose thumbs and great toes were cut off by the children of *Israel*, because he had served seventy princes in the same manner. This example shews, that God is just, and that he brings upon cruel and unrighteous men the same evil they had done to others.

C H A P. II.

THE children of *Israel* falling into idolatry after the death of *Joshua*, God sent an angel to reprove them for their rebellion; and punished them by giving them up several times into the hands of their enemies: and when they turned to him he raised up judges to deliver them.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS chapter contains several instructions of great importance, and particularly these four. I. It is said that the *Jews* corrupted themselves after the death of *Joshua* and the elders, and that another generation arose that knew not God; which shews us, that men easily forget the goodness of the Lord, and their duty; that nations soon grow corrupt when they have not good rulers; and that one of the greatest misfortunes that can happen to a nation is, when God takes away from them pious rulers and magistrates. II. This chapter informs us, that God, for the punishment of the *Jews*, delivered them up to their enemies; that the hand of God was every where against them for evil; and that they fell into great distress. From whence we
may

may infer, that God withdraws his protection from those nations that sin against him; and that as soon as we forsake him, we must be miserable. III. We are likewise led to reflect upon God's goodness towards the *Jews*. When the Lord saw them engaged in rebellion and idolatry, he sent his angel to reproach them for their unbelief; and as soon as they acknowledged and bewailed their sins, he was moved with their repentance and tears, and raised them up deliverers. God seeks only the conversion and salvation of sinners; to bring them to himself he warns them of their danger, and to his gracious warnings adds his chastening rod: but as soon as he sees them sincerely humbled, his wrath is turned away from them. Lastly, It is here said, that as soon as the judges were dead, and the children of *Israel* had a little rest, they forgot the good resolutions they had made in their affliction, returned to their former sins, and exposed themselves to fresh judgments. Such is the inconstancy of mankind, who easily abuse the rest which God gives them: which shews how necessary it is God should correct and afflict them from time to time, in order to awaken them, and prevent their being corrupted and ruined by prosperity.

C H A P. III.

THIS chapter contains, I. The names of the nations that remained among the children of *Israel*, and tempted them to idolatry. II. The history of the three first judges of *Israel*; which were *Othniel*, who delivered the people from the yoke of the king of *Mesopotamia*; *Ehud*, who delivered them from the *Moabites*; and *Shamgar*, who slew the *Philistines*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS chapter engages us to consider, I. That God suffered some of the *Canaanites* to remain among the children of *Israel* to try his people, and to chasten them by means of those idolatrous nations. This is a lively representation of our condition in this world, where God dispenses evil as well as good, and exposes us to divers temptations and trials, to put us upon our guard and try our fidelity. II. We are here told, that the *Israelites*, making marriages and mingling with the *Canaanites*, contrary to the express command of God, and worshipping their idols; the Lord punished them for it by this very people, or by their neighbouring kings, in order to bring them back to their duty. This leads us to consider all intercourse and familiarity with the wicked as sinful; and shews, that God, in justice as well as love to men, chastises them that he may cure them; and makes their sin prove their punishment. III. When the *Jews* acknowledged their fault, and believed in the Lord, he raised them up deliverers: from whence we learn, how profitable it is to be afflicted, and the great mercy of the Lord towards them that make a right use of their afflictions. IV. It is said of the *Jews*, that as soon as they enjoyed any rest, they again corrupted themselves: which is a melancholy proof that prosperity is a dangerous state, and that afflictions are very necessary. Lastly, There is a particular observation to be made upon the action of *Ehud*, who slew the king of the *Moa-bites*. This action would have been criminal had not *Ehud* done it by an express order from God; and therefore it ought not to be made a precedent to authorise any thing of the like nature, either towards unjust and cruel oppressors, or any person whatsoever.

C H A P. IV.

THIS chapter contains the history of *Deborah*, who judged *Israel* after the death of *Shamgar*, and with *Barak* delivered the children of *Israel* from the tyranny of *Jabin* the king of *Hazar*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are three things principally to be considered in this chapter: I. That the children of *Israel* offended God again, and for their punishment were exposed to the tyranny of *Jabin* king of *Hazor*, who oppressed them twenty years. Alas! how soon do men forget the evils they have suffered, and bring greater upon themselves, by returning to their sins. II. That God, moved by the tears and repentance of the *Israelites*, delivered them by the hands of a woman, named *Deborah*, who judged them at that time. God makes use of what instruments he pleases, even the weakest, to bring about his designs; and the choice he made of that woman, was designed to teach the *Israelites*, that they were beholden to him alone for their deliverance. III. As for the action of *Jael*, who killed *Sisera* when he was asleep in her tent, where she had invited him to come and conceal himself, though she and her people were at peace with him; we must look upon it as intirely wrong in itself, and by no means to be imitated, though God was pleased to make use of it to bring about the utter overthrow of the enemies of his people.

C H A P. V.

DE^EBORAH praises the Lord in a song after she and *Barak* had gained the victory over the king of *Hazor*. In this song she celebrates the power of God, and particularly this great deliverance he had just wrought for his people. This song is wrote in a figurative and poetical stile; full of thoughts and expressions quite unusual among us, which makes it somewhat obscure.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS song of *Deborah* shews, that that woman was as famous for her piety and zeal, as for her courage and conduct; wherein she may serve for an example, not only to persons of her own sex, but to all that are in authority, and teach them to trust in God alone, and give him the glory of all their success. It appears also from hence, that the custom of singing public hymns of praise to God, for signal mercies received, was very ancient; which should excite our zeal and gratitude, not only for the temporal favours we receive, but especially for spiritual blessings and deliverances; referring all to the power and goodness of God, praising and blessing him in a public and solemn manner.

C H A P. VI.

THIS chapter has four parts: I. The rebellion of the *Israelites* against God, and their punishment, in being made subject to the *Midianites*, and the rebukes of the prophet upon that occasion. II. The calling of *Gideon*, who was the fifth judge of *Israel*. III. *Gideon's* zeal in destroying the altar of *Baal*. IV. The miracle of the fleece.

R E F L E C -

REFLECTIONS.

I. **WE** have here another instance of the *Israelites* rebellion, and a proof of their proneness to idolatry, notwithstanding all the miseries they had endured, and all the deliverances God had vouchsafed to them; we see likewise how God punished them by delivering them into the hands of the *Midianites*, who oppressed them, and reduced them to great distress; as well as the goodness of God when they cried unto him, in sending them a prophet to exhort them to repentance, and in raising up *Gideon* to be their deliverer. This history shews, what is the usual wickedness and ingratitude of men towards God; the necessity and advantage of affliction, and the Lord's mercy towards those who with humility turn to him. Let it be observed, that when the angel of the Lord called *Gideon*, and assured him God was with him; he could not believe the Lord was with his people, when they were so cruelly oppressed by the *Midianites*; but still the angel of the Lord promised him the *Israelites* should be delivered by his means. The church and people of God are sometimes reduced to such a state, that God seems to have cast them off; but they should never despair of his assistance, even in the greatest extremity, because then God is most sure to deliver them. The two miracles which God wrought, one in consuming with fire the flesh and the cakes that *Gideon* had presented to the angel, and the other in the fleece; tended to assure that ruler of the divine protection and assistance. Lastly, It appears from this chapter, that *Gideon* was a man of great piety, humility and faith, which he gave proof of in his discourse with the angel; and his great zeal appeared particularly in demolishing the altar of *Baal*. From this example we learn, that piety and humility

lity are not inconsistent with true valour; and that God assists and protects those who endeavour to promote his glory: for though *Gideon* by destroying the altar of *Baal* exposed himself to great danger, yet no harm happened to him, any more than to his father *Josab*.

C H A P. VII.

I. **G**OD orders *Gideon* to choose three hundred men out of all the army, and promises by them to destroy the *Midianites*. II. *Gideon* is confirmed in his hopes of victory, by a dream which he heard one of the soldiers of *Midian* relate to his companion. III. After this he attacks the *Midianites*, and entirely defeats them.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS history is attended with very extraordinary marks of the particular interposition of providence. I. God's ordering all those to be sent away who, in the army of *Israel*, were afraid of their enemies; and, of those that remained, taking only three hundred: which was a sufficient proof that God was the author of this victory. II. The intervention of providence in the dream of the *Midianitish* soldier, which served to dishearten the enemies of *Israel*, and inspire *Gideon* and those that were with him with courage and confidence. III. The terror and consternation of the *Midianites*, who were routed only by the noise of the trumpets, and the sight of the lamps which *Gideon's* soldiers held in their hands, and put into such confusion that they killed one another. These are all such extraordinary marks of divine power, as leave no room to doubt but the almighty fought for his people. From hence we likewise learn, that God often brings about

the wise ends of his providence by means which appear the weakest and most ineffectual; that he makes the wicked, and the enemies of his church, and of good men, bring about their own ruin and destruction; and that when he has chastened and afflicted those he loves, he never fails to help and deliver them.

C H A P. VIII.

I. **G**IDEON, when he had appeased the *Ephraimites*, pursues the victory he had gained over the *Midianites*; and punishes the cities of *Succoth* and *Peniel*, for refusing refreshment to his soldiers. II. After these victories, the men of *Israel* would have made him king; which he refused. He makes an ephod, which was a snare unto him: however, *Israel* had rest all his days. After his death they fell again into idolatry.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are here to observe, I. The continuance of that success which God granted *Gideon*, and the advantages he obtained over the *Midianites*. II. The just punishment of the inhabitants of *Succoth* and *Peniel*, who refused to furnish victuals for his army, and insulted him. III. The justice and clemency which he shewed in the punishment of *Zebah* and *Zalmunna*, who would not have been put to death, if those two princes had not been guilty of the murder of his brethren. IV. His piety and humility in refusing to be made a king. V. The fault he committed in making an ephod, which is thought to have been an habit or ornament worn by the priests, or some image. Though *Gideon* perhaps did not make this ephod with any ill design, but only as a memorial of his victory, and an expres-

sion of their gratitude; yet, as it was contrary to the law of God, it was a sin; and this ephod became afterwards an occasion of idolatry to the people, and of the ruin of his family, as the sacred history informs us. This example shews, that those to whom God has granted great favours, and who are endowed with great virtues, are sometimes guilty of faults that bring upon them and their posterity the judgments of God. Lastly, We see the ingratitude of the *Jews* to *Gideon*, since they shewed not the least mark of kindness to his family after his death, though they owed him so great obligations. But their ingratitude to God is chiefly remarkable, who, as soon as *Gideon* was dead, forsook the service of the true God and worshipped idols. A sad example of the proneness of mankind to forget the divine blessings in prosperity!

C H A P. IX.

I. **A** *Bimelech*, the son of *Gideon*, is made prince by the men of *Shechem*. He is reckoned the sixth judge of *Israel*, and ruled three years. He kills all his brethren excepting *Jotham*, who escaping his fury, reproached the *Shechemites* with their ingratitude, and foretold their ruin in the parable of the trees and the bramble. The meaning of which was, That *Gideon* and his sons had refused to reign; and that *Abimelech* was made prince, though unworthy of it, being a very bad man, and the son of a concubine. II. After this *Abimelech* and the *Shechemites* falling out, a man named *Gaal* persuaded the *Shechemites* to revolt against *Abimelech*, but was defeated, and the city of *Shechem*, with all its inhabitants, was destroyed. III. Soon after *Abimelech* besieges *Thebez*, and is killed by a woman: Thus both *Abimelech* and

and the men of *Shechem* were punished, as *Jotham* had foretold.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TWO things are here offered to our consideration, I. The ambition of *Abimelech*, who, instead of imitating the piety and modesty of his father *Gideon*, who had refused a kingdom, would be made king of the *Shechemites*; and his cruelty towards his brethren, in causing them to be put to death. God permitted this strange event, for the punishment of *Gideon's* family, as well as of the *Shechemites*, who submitted themselves to *Abimelech*, instead of remaining in the condition they had been in during the life of *Gideon*. In like manner, God, for wise reasons, suffers tyrants to set themselves up, and cruel and unjust men to succeed in their undertakings. II. *Jotham* reproached the *Shechemites* for their ingratitude and perfidiousness, and foretold their ruin, and the ruin of *Abimelech*, which accordingly happened afterwards. It is true indeed, that *Abimelech*, though he reigned unjustly, and was guilty of the murder of his brethren, had good success at the first, as he conquered *Gaal*, and the *Shechemites* that had rebelled against him, God so permitting for their punishment; but at last he was killed by a woman, whilst he besieged the city of *Thebez*. Thus the *Shechemites*, who had contributed to the death of the sons of *Gideon*, and to the setting up of *Abimelech*, were punished by the same prince whom they had chosen; and *Abimelech* himself, after he had been an instrument in the hands of a just God for the chastisement of that people, underwent the punishment which he had deserved, and *Jotham* had foretold. Thus God brought upon the head of *Abimelech*, as the sacred historian observes, the evil that he

had committed against his father and his brethren. Sooner or later the curse of God overtakes unjust and cruel men, and brings them at last to an evil end, after having granted them good success, and made use of them for the correction of others.

C H A P. X.

I. **T**HIS chapter gives an account of *Tola*, who was the seventh, and *Jair*, who was the eighth judge of *Israel*. II. Of their being delivered into the hands of the *Philistines* and the *Ammonites*, for relapsing into idolatry, from whose oppression the Lord at first refused to deliver them; but at last, moved by their humiliation, he took pity on them.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT we have chiefly to consider here is, That the *Jews*, forgetting the mercies of the Lord, and abusing the rest which he had granted them, returned to their idolatry after the death of *Tola* and *Jair*; so that they worshipped all the gods of the neighbouring nations, and forsook the Lord, and entirely rejected his service. These frequent relapses shew the proneness of the *Jews* to idolatry, and how necessary it was they should be afflicted, to heal their backslidings. Men are very apt to forget themselves when they enjoy ease and prosperity, and to abuse those blessings. When the *Israelites* had forsaken the Lord, he suffered their enemies to oppress them and have them in subjection; and even when they called unto him in their trouble, he refused to hear their cry and to help them, and sent them to the false gods whom they worshipped; but at last, moved with their calamities, and seeing that they put away their idols, he again took pity on them,

them; and raised them up a deliverer. This proceeding of the almighty with the *Jews*, leads us to consider the justice of God in chastising those who offend him; and shews, that the first motions of repentance which sinners feel in their affliction, are not always sincere: for which reason, God does not immediately deliver them, nor pardon them, till he sees they are truly humbled, and they give proof of the sincerity of their repentance, by persevering in prayer, and forsaking their sins.

C H A P. XI.

IN this chapter begins the history of *Jephthab*, who was the ninth judge of *Israel*. In this history there are three things most observable; namely, the manner of his being made captain over *Israel*; his war with the *Ammonites*; and his vow.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE may here observe, I. That although *Jephthab* had been driven away, and ill used by the men of *Gilead*, yet he undertook to defend them, when desired. II. Before he went against the king of *Ammon*, who made war upon *Israel*, he sent ambassadors to him twice to endeavour to divert him from his design, and to represent to him the justice of their cause. This cool and prudent behaviour teaches us, that before we proceed to extremities, we should try all gentler ways: an example which Christian princes would do well to imitate. III. In the victory that *Jephthab* gained over the *Ammonites*, we see that God, though he is pleased for a time to bear with kings who are engaged in unjust wars, punishes them at last. IV. *Jephthab*'s vow was a mark of his zeal, and at the same time of his imprudence. His great grief at the sight of his daughter,

and what he did in consequence of his vow, teaches to avoid rash vows, and to fulfil the vows we do make, as far as lawfully we can. It is not, however, necessary to believe that *Jephthab* sacrificed his daughter, that is, burnt her, which would have been a barbarous action, and odious in the sight of God; but that he consecrated or devoted her to the Lord, in such a manner that she never married; which is the meaning of the expression, *She knew no man*. Now the reason why *Jephthab* expressed so much concern at this was, because as she was his only child, he would be deprived of an opportunity of seeing any posterity by her. Lastly, The noble resolution and piety of *Jephthab's* daughter, who would not have her father exposed himself or the people to the divine vengeance, by breaking his vow, is an example for us to sacrifice our private interest, and all that is dearest to us, to the glory of God and the good of the public.

C H A P. XII.

I. **J**EPHTHAH being attacked by the *Ephraimites*, makes war against them, and kills a great number of them; and when he had judged *Israel* six years, he died. II. After his death, *Ibzan* was the tenth judge, *Elon* the eleventh, and *Abdon* the twelfth.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE defeat of the *Ephraimites* by *Jephthab*, was a just punishment for their pride, in unjustly declaring war against a man, to whom the *Israelites* in general owed so great obligation; an instance of the just judgment of God on those who break the peace, and attack others without a just cause. The account we have at the end of the chapter, of God's raising

raising up other judges after the death of *Jephthah*, shews us his forbearance and long-suffering towards the *Israelites*; since, notwithstanding their frequent rebellions, he sent them from time to time judges and captains to govern, and deliver them from those that oppressed them.

C H A P. XIII.

THE *Israelites* being oppressed by the *Philistines*, God sends an angel to *Manoah*'s wife, and afterwards to *Manoah* himself, to promise them a son who should deliver *Israel*. This promise the angel confirmed, by causing fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice which *Manoah* offered unto the Lord. Some time after *Sampson* was born; who became afterwards the thirteenth judge of *Israel*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE reflections to be made upon this chapter are as follow: I. That God, in great mercy to his people, caused *Sampson* to be born, at a time when they had been enslaved by the *Philistines* forty years. II. That the birth of *Sampson* was miraculous; that an angel foretold it to his mother, who was barren; and that the promise of the angel was ratified by a signal miracle, fire from heaven having consumed the sacrifice of *Manoah*, *Sampson*'s father: all which denoted, that *Sampson* should be a man raised by God in a very extraordinary manner. III. It appears by this history, that *Manoah* and his wife were both godly persons; and that the son which God gave them was a reward of their piety. We may, lastly, observe, that the angel acquainted *Manoah* and his wife, that the child which was to be born should be dedicated to God by the vow of a *Nazarite*; which shewed,

shewed, that God designed *Sampson* for great things, and that whatever he did in an extraordinary manner should proceed from the spirit of God.

C H A P. XIV.

THE sacred historian relates the marriage of *Sampson*; and the riddle he put forth upon the honey he found in the body of a lion which he had killed. This history is related, because it was the beginning and occasion of the war that *Sampson* had with the *Philistines*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE must observe upon the life of *Sampson* in general, that though God made use of him for the deliverance of the children of *Israel*, yet he did several things that are not to be imitated, and which are even to be condemned. His marriage with a *Philistine* woman was against the law of God; but God permitted it, because it gave *Sampson* an occasion to make war upon the *Philistines*. Thus God suffers several things for wise ends best known to himself, though he does not approve the things themselves. Lastly, It appears clearly from this relation, that *Sampson's* great strength, and all that he did against the *Philistines*, was owing to a divine assistance.

C H A P. XV.

I. SAMPSON, provoked because his wife was given to another person, burns the *Philistines* corn, and then defeats them. **II.** Being, after this, delivered to the *Philistines*, he breaks the bands which they had tied him with, and kills a thousand of them with the jaw-bone of an ass; and being very thirsty God by a miracle quenched his thirst.

R E F L E C.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE must observe on this relation, that God suffered *Sampson's* wife to be taken from him, and the house of his father in law to be burnt by the *Philistines*, to give *Sampson* an occasion to chastise them, and even kill great numbers of them: so that what *Sampson* did out of a spirit of revenge, proved a means, in the hands of God, to bring down the pride and tyranny of the *Philistines*, who then oppressed the *Israelites*. The several events of this history shew, that as long as *Sampson* kept the vow of a *Nazarite* nothing could hurt him; he was endued with extraordinary and supernatural strength, by which he broke the cords they bound him with, and slew a thousand *Philistines*; and God hearkened so far to his prayer, as by a miracle to supply him with water to quench his thirst. But we shall see in the sequel, that he was deprived of his strength, and of all these advantages, because he did not religiously observe his vow. However, these extraordinary events were so dispensed by providence, because very proper to make a deep impression upon the minds both of the *Israelites* and *Philistines*, and lead them to acknowledge the power of the true God, and look upon *Sampson* as an extraordinary person raised up to deliver *Israel*.

C H A P. XVI.

I. **S**AMPSON carries away the gates of the city *Gaza*. II. After this, a woman named *Dalilab*, having prevailed upon him to discover to her that his strength consisted in his hair, delivered him to the *Philistines*, who put out his eyes. III. Some time after he pulled down the temple of *Dagon*,

Dagon, destroyed a great number of *Philistines*, and perished himself upon the same occasion.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

HERE we are again to observe, that God was with *Sampson* whilst he kept the vow of a *Nazarite*; but that the cause of his ruin was his love of women, and in particular of *Dalilah*; who by her artifice prevailed upon him to tell her wherein his strength consisted; which *Sampson* could not do without breaking his vow, and exposing himself to the danger of losing those great advantages which till then he enjoyed. The loss of *Sampson's* strength, and the shameful condition he was reduced to by those very *Philistines*, who had been before under the greatest terror and consternation upon his account, shew plainly what misfortunes men expose themselves to when they forsake God, and are not faithful in the discharge of those duties they are particularly called to; and that God forsakes those who give themselves up to the infamous lusts of the flesh, and those that despise the gifts and graces they have received from him. It is to be observed, nevertheless, that God again endued *Sampson* with such an extraordinary strength, as enabled him to destroy three thousand *Philistines* at his death, to lessen the power of those idolatrous people. Lastly, It must be considered upon the whole history of *Sampson*, that he did several actions which were very criminal; but that God makes use of what persons he pleases, even those who have not true piety, in the execution of his designs, which we have several instances of in holy writ. Therefore the behaviour of *Sampson*, or any others mentioned in scripture, whose lives were irregular, is not to be imitated any farther than it was right and agreeable to the will of God.

C H A P. XVII.

A Man named *Micab*, caused two idols to be made, and appointed one of his sons to be their priest, till meeting with a Levite, he established him in the place of his son. It is not, perhaps, possible to determine exactly the time when what is related in this chapter happened. It seems to be best referred to the times following *Joshua* and the elders; when *Phineas*, the son of *Eleazar* the high priest, and grandson of *Aaron*, was living. See chap. xx. 28.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **I**N this history of *Micab*, we see how exceedingly the *Israelites* were corrupted at that time, and that they were exceedingly prone to idolatry; since *Micab*, who professed to serve God, set up in his house a particular worship, and that too superstitious and idolatrous. From whence we may learn, how dangerous it is to forsake the worship which God has prescribed in his word; and that men cannot but go astray when they set up ways of worship of their own invention. II. *Micab's* great desire to have a Levite in his house, and his opinion that God would bless him for that reason, is worth our notice. For though this persuasion was in him ill-grounded, because he had set up in his family an idolatrous worship; we may, nevertheless, conclude from hence, that we cannot have too great a regard for the divine service, and the holy ministry, provided it be performed in its purity; and that we ought to look upon this advantage as the source of all our happiness.

C H A P. XVIII.

THE *Jews* of the tribe of *Dan*, being too much straitned in the country they inhabited, sent out spies to view the city of *Laiſh*, and took it afterwards, having consulted the Lord by means of the Levite that was with *Micah*, whom they took away with them to be their priest.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

FOR the right understanding of this chapter, and that we may make a proper improvement of it, we must make these three reflections: I. That those of the tribe of *Dan* justly made war upon the city of *Laiſh*; since the inhabitants of that city were *Canaanites*, whose country God had given to the children of *Israel*. II. That the *Jews* of the tribe of *Dan*, before they proceeded to the execution of their design, consulted the Lord by the means of a Levite, and desired to have that Levite with them for their priest. Though these *Jews* sinned in applying to a Levite who had set up an unlawful kind of worship; yet, we may learn from hence, not to undertake any thing without examining whether our designs are agreeable to the will of the almighty; and to esteem above all other things the advantage of serving God publicly, provided we do it in the manner he himself has ordained. III. We must observe on this relation, that although God did not approve of the worship set up by *Micah* in his house, because it was mixed with idolatry; yet he vouchsafed to give success to those of the tribe of *Dan*, that he might bring about the designs of his providence. But this tribe did not make such grateful returns for their success as they ought; since they continued this idolatrous worship among them. Lastly, We see by the whole

whole of this chapter, that the *Jews* were in great disorder with respect to religion and morality. And the same is very manifest likewise from the following chapter.

C H A P. XIX.

THE sin of the inhabitants of *Gibeab*, in ravishing and killing the wife of a Levite; which occasioned all the tribes of *Israel* to make war upon the tribe of *Benjamin*.

• R E F L E C T I O N S .

THIS history proves, that the inhabitants of *Gibeab* were a set of abandoned wretches, and that, in general, there was great disorder and licentiousness among the children of *Israel*. This was chiefly owing to their want of rulers who paid a strict regard to the law of God, and their being suffered every one to act without control, as he himself thought fit. Those who have been so happy as to know God, may grow very dissolute and abandoned, when they forsake the laws of religion and justice, and are suffered to do it with impunity.

C H A P. XX.

I. **T**HE rest of the tribes make war upon the tribe of *Benjamin*; because they would not deliver up the inhabitants of the town of *Gibeab*, who had been guilty of ravishing and murdering the wife of a Levite, as mentioned in the preceeding chapter. **II.** The issue of this war was, that the *Israelites*, after being twice defeated, took *Gibeab*, and made a great slaughter of the *Benjamites*; inso-much that that tribe was almost intirely destroyed.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE resolution taken by the tribes of *Israel* to make war upon *Benjamin*, because that tribe refused to punish the infamous action committed by the inhabitants of *Gibeab*, proves, that though the *Israelites* were very dissolute, yet there was still among them some remains of zeal, and love of justice. II. Let it be observed, that they did not declare war against the *Benjamites*, till they had first called upon them to punish the criminals. This cool and prudent conduct, should teach Christians never to be hasty in shewing resentment, nor make use of severe methods, till they have tried what can be done by remonstrance and gentler means. III. Let us consider, that although God approved of this war, and had determined to chastise the *Benjamites*, yet, because the other tribes were not innocent, he suffered them to be twice defeated, to make them sensible of their sins; and did not grant them the victory, till they had given marks of their repentance by fasting and humiliation. Those whom God is pleased to give success to, and make use of as instruments for the chastisement of others, are often guilty themselves, and have need to be chastised; and God does not display his strength, nor fulfil his promises, till men have sincerely humbled themselves before him. Lastly, What befel the *Benjamites* for refusing to punish the men of *Gibeab* for the horrid crime committed among them, shews, that the sins of a few persons may become the sin of a whole people, and sometimes expose a nation to great miseries, when they guilty remain unpunished, and are even countenanced by those who ought to restrain vice and punish the transgressors.

C H A P. XXI.

IN this chapter we see, I. The grief of the *Israelites* when they saw the tribe of *Benjamin* almost utterly destroyed. II. What they did to restore the ruined tribe.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE concern which the *Israelites* expressed at the havock made among their brethren of the tribe of *Benjamin*, in their late defeat, should teach us never to rejoice at any advantage we gain, when others suffer by it though they should have brought the evil upon themselves by their own fault. This history does likewise instruct us, never to give way to resentment, how just soever it may appear, nor to chastise the guilty with too great severity; lest in our anger we do what we may have reason to repent of afterwards. This was the case with the *Israelites*, who, instead of using their victory over the *Benjamites* with moderation, made too great a slaughter of them; and when they perceived that one of the tribes of *Israel* was almost extinct, were deeply concerned at it. Lastly, As the *Israelites* laboured to recover the tribe of *Benjamin*, humanity and charity require us to contribute all in our power to the relief and comfort of the miserable, especially of our brethren, and when the glory of God and the good of religion require it at our hands.

The end of the book of JUDGES.

T H E
B O O K
O F
R U T H.

A R G U M E N T.

This book contains the history of Ruth, a Moabitish woman, who being a widow, came into the land of Judah, where she married Boaz, the kinsman of her first husband. This history was committed to writing because it serves to settle the genealogy of king David, who was the grandson of Boaz, and consequently that of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not certain what time the several circumstances of this history were transacted.

C H A P. I.

- I. **A** Man named *Elimelech*, is forced by a famine to leave the land of *Israel*, and go into the country of *Moab*, with his wife *Naomi* and his two sons. He there dies, and his sons marry two women of *Moab*, and some time after they died also.
- II. After their death, their mother *Naomi*, hearing that the famine was at an end, returned into the land of *Israel* with *Ruth*, one of her daughters in law, who would not leave her.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

WHAT chiefly commands our attention in this chapter, is the virtue and piety of *Naomi*; who, when she had lost her husband and her two sons in a strange country, preserved a tender affection for her two daughters in law, though they were women of *Moab*; and bore with patience and resignation the several afflictions with which the Lord was pleased to visit her, in the loss of her husband and her sons; and returned into her own country as soon as she could, to worship God according to the law. The sentiments of *Ruth* are likewise very remarkable, who would not leave *Naomi*, and even declared she would embrace her religion, and worship the God which she worshipped. This shews, that this woman, though a *Moabite's* and a stranger, was a woman of virtue, and had renounced idolatry to serve the true God.

C H A P. II.

RUTH, coming into the land of *Israel* with *Naomi* her mother in law, at the time of harvest, goes and gleanes in the field of *Boaz*, the kinsman of her first husband, who uses her very kindly.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **I**N this chapter we see, that *Ruth* and *Naomi*, who were very poor, providentially came to the field of *Boaz*, where they found provision. Thus God took care for the support of these two women who trusted in him. II. It appeareth from this chapter, that *Boaz* shewed particular kindness to *Ruth*, because he had been informed of her pious behaviour to her mother in law, and of her earnest desire to be joined to the people of God, which she shewed in leaving the land of her nativity. This is

an evident proof that *Boaz* himself was a man of virtue, and married *Ruth* afterwards because he had conceived an esteem for her. And since it was *Ruth's* reputation which occasioned these marks of kindness from *Boaz*, we should consider *Ruth's* good fortune as a reward of her prudent behaviour, and an instance of that blessing from the Lord which attends those who seek him, and particularly those who faithfully discharge their duty to their parents. *Naomi* too gave proof of her piety, in blessing the Lord for all the good things she received from him, and for shewing mercy to her and her daughter in law, as he had done to her husband and her sons, who were dead. Thus let us bless God for all his mercies vouchsafed to us, and receive them as the tokens of his love.

C H A P. III.

RUTH, instructed by *Naomi* her mother in law, let *Boaz* know that it was his right to marry her, as he was a near kinsman to her deceased husband.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THOUGH the action of *Ruth*, set forth in this chapter, seems, at first view, hardly consistent with decency: yet if we consider the simplicity of those times, it will appear at least excusable: to which if we add the virtuous character of the woman, the age of *Boaz*, the manner of his addressing her when he first perceived her, the testimony he bore to her prudence and good conduct, the public proceedings before the wedding, and the several other circumstances of this history, there is not the least ground to suspect the virtue of either of them: and therefore, as there was nothing criminal in the whole transaction, so there can be nothing to countenance wickedness and licentiousness.

C H A P.

C H A P. IV.

BOAZ called the nearest relation of *Elimelech*, the husband of *Naomi*, and asked him, whether he would make use of his right of redemption, and purchase a field which had belonged to *Elimelech*, and marry *Ruth*; which he refusing to do, *Boaz* purchased it, and married *Ruth*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IT is to be observed, that *Boaz*, before he took *Ruth* to wife, applied to one who was more nearly related to her than he, to know whether he would make use of his right of redemption; and did not marry her till this man had refused to do it. This public proceeding before the judges, with all the formalities usual on the like occasion, proves the uprightness and purity of *Boaz*'s conduct. It appears likewise from this history, that the law given by God for the preservation and distinction of families and inheritances was then observed. Further, the reason why this marriage of *Boaz* with *Ruth*'s is set down, is, because *Boaz* was the great grandfather of king *David*, as we find by the genealogy at the end of this book. And since *Jesus Christ* our Lord descended from king *David*, it is plain that *Ruth*, who was a *Moabite*, is reckoned among the ancestors of the Messiah, as well as *Rahab* the *Canaanite*; which St *Matthew* expressly takes notice of in the first chapter of his gospel, where he sets down the genealogy of *Jesus Christ*. We should consider, lastly, that God thought fit these two women, who were strangers, should be united to his people *Israel* by marriage, to shew that the Gentiles, and strangers to the commonwealth of *Israel*, should be one day received into covenant with him; which accordingly came to pass after the coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

The end of the book of RUTH.

T H E
F I R S T B O O K
O F
S A M U E L.

A R G U M E N T.

In the first book of Samuel we see the state and condition of the people of Israel under the government of Eli, who was the fourteenth judge ; under that of Samuel, who was the fifteenth and last ; and under the reign of Saul, who was the first king of Israel.

C H A P. I.

IN this first chapter is contained the history of the birth of *Samuel*. I. *Elkanah* his father, and *Hannab* his mother, going to *Shilob* to worship there, *Hannab* besought the Lord to give her a son, and promised to devote him to his service. II. Some time after *Samuel* was born ; and when he was weaned, his mother carried him to *Shilob*, to fulfil her vow ; when she presented him to *Eli* the high priest, and dedicated him to God for his whole life.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

WE observe in this chapter, I. That there was something extraordinary in the birth of *Samuel* ; as his mother *Hannab* was barren, and obtained

tained him by her prayers and vows ; which shewed that *Samuel* would be a person raised by God in an extraordinary manner. II. We observe the piety of that holy woman ; which appeared in her prayers to God in *Shiloh* ; in her humble and respectful answer to *Eli*, who accused her of being drunk ; in the vow she made to dedicate the child to God ; and in the care she took to fulfil that vow, carrying the young child to *Shiloh*. This is a noble example of piety and meekness ; which is particularly calculated to teach parents, and mothers especially, to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord, and devote them to his service. III. The birth of *Samuel*, which was the effect of his mother's prayers and tears, shews, that God graciously accepts the prayers of those who fly to him in their afflictions, and call upon him in the uprightness and integrity of their hearts, and with a pious intention. Lastly, The judgment which the high priest *Eli* passed upon the mother of *Samuel*, who thought she was drunk, is a warning to us, never to judge rashly of our neighbours, nor condemn them only for some things which may appear wrong ; since we may chance to pronounce some actions criminal, which are not only innocent, but even well-pleasing to God.

C H A P. II.

I. **I**N the first part of this chapter, we have the song of *Hannah*, the mother of *Samuel* ; where-in she returns thanks to God for the birth of her son. II. In the second, we see the irregular lives of the sons of *Eli* ; the weakness of their father, in neither reproving nor correcting them as he ought ; and the judgments of God denounced by the prophet upon *Eli* and his family.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE song of *Hannah*, the mother of *Samuel*, and her public and solemn thanksgiving to God at *Shiloh*, are a new proof of her piety; and teach us to express our gratitude, and bless the Lord when he grants us any signal favour. We learn particularly in this song, that providence overrules all things; that God confounds the proud; that he takes care of the weak and afflicted who fear him; that he protects them, and hears their prayers. This is a doctrine full of comfort and consolation to good men, supporting them in their trials, and leading them to holiness, and trust in God. The account of the horrid impiety and sacrilege of the sons of *Eli*, should convince us, that the loose and evil lives of the ministers of religion, is the greatest of all scandals; that nothing corrupts the people more, or more certainly exposes them to the judgments of God. The conduct of *Eli* next demands our serious attention; who, instead of punishing his sons as they deserved, only gently reprov'd them; and therefore God by his prophet declared, that, for this very thing his children and his posterity should be destroyed. This very remarkable example should teach parents, that indulging their children is a very great sin; that God punishes such over tender and indulgent parents by the children themselves; and that it often occasions the ruin and destruction of families. But this indulgence is particularly sinful in persons of a public character, and especially in church governors and magistrates, when they do not suppress vice and irregularity, opposing it with becoming steadiness and resolution, to the utmost of their power. God's sharp reproof of *Eli* by the prophet, and the miseries which soon after befel his children, and all the people, prove, that great misfortunes are owing to this indulgence, and that not only private persons,

but

but the public likewise, are thereby exposed to the divine vengeance.

C H A P. III.

I. **G**OD appears for the first time to *Samuel*, who was then a child, and gives him notice of the ruin of *Eli's* house. II. *Samuel* tells *Eli* what God had revealed to him; who, when he heard it, submitted with resignation to the will of the Lord.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE instructions we receive from this chapter are, I. That as God made himself known to *Samuel* when he was very young, so he delights to manifest himself to those that fear him; but particularly to bestow his gifts and graces on those that devote themselves to him from their tender age. II. That we, with *Samuel*, should hearken to the voice of God, what way soever he is pleased to reveal himself to us; and should say always, like him, with all readiness and humility, *Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth*. III. The behaviour of *Samuel*, who at first was afraid to tell *Eli* what the Lord had said unto him, but when he was called upon to do it, concealed nothing from him, is a beautiful example of modesty, and at the same time of courage and resolution. Let us be ever so loth to speak disagreeable truths; yet when we are called to it, neither shame nor fear should hinder us from doing it. IV. What God said to *Samuel*, concerning the ruin of *Eli's* house, proves, that those who do not suppress vice and immorality, without respect of persons, are guilty of a great sin, and often provoke the wrath of God in such a manner, that nothing can prevent his judgments. V. The answer which *Eli* made to *Samuel*, saying, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*; shews

shews that *Eli*, though greatly in fault, had however pious sentiments, and acknowledged the justice of God in punishing him. Thus should we submit in all things to the will of God with a perfect resignation, and humbly adore the righteousness of his judgments, especially when we have been wanting in our duty.

C H A P. IV.

I. **T**HE *Israelites* make war upon the *Philistines*, and are twice defeated; and the second time the *Philistines* made great slaughter among them, and took the ark of the covenant, which they had brought into the camp. II. The two sons of *Eli*, *Hophni* and *Phineas*, perished in this war. *Eli*, at hearing the news, fell backwards and broke his neck; and the wife of *Phineas* died also.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are two things chiefly to be observed in this chapter, I. That the defeat of the *Israelites*, the death of *Eli*'s sons, and of *Eli* himself, were proofs of God's wrath against the people of *Israel*, and the family of *Eli*, and the completion of those threatenings which had been denounced by God against that priest. The threatenings of the Lord never fail to be executed; and sooner or later his judgments fall upon a guilty people, upon families where vice prevails, and especially upon the ministers of religion who neglect their duty, and disgrace their character by their irregular lives. II. What beel the *Israelites* deserves a particular attention: When they were defeated the first time, they thought, that if they brought the ark into the camp they should be conquerors. When the ark came, they were filled with joy and confidence, and the *Philistines* were greatly

greatly alarmed. But this did not prevent the *Israelites* from being again defeated; nay, God even permitted those idolatrous people to take the ark, which was the most express token of his presence among his people. To pretend to confidence in God, when we are actually rebelling against him, is mere rashness and hypocrisy; for neither the covenant of God, nor the signs and seals of his covenant, can secure from divine vengeance those who provoke him by their sins.

C H A P. V.

THE *Philistines* having placed the ark of the covenant in the temple of their idol *Dagon*, that idol was thrown down and broken in pieces; and the *Philistines* were so tormented by a disease which God inflicted upon them, and by mice, which laid waste their country, that after they had carried the ark to several places, they were forced at last to send it back to the land of *Israel*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE must consider here, that if the ark of the covenant was taken by the *Philistines*, and even carried into the temple of *Dagon*; God permitted this strange event, to shew how much he was provoked against the *Israelites*, and at the same time to give the *Philistines* in their own country proofs of his power. The idol *Dagon* actually fell, and was broke in pieces before the ark; the *Philistines* were afflicted with a sore disease; and besides this, the mice made great havock in their country. And as they had the ark carried to another city, to see whether the same misfortunes would befall them, God continued his hand heavy upon them. All this happened to prevent the *Philistines* from insulting the
God

God of *Israel* because they had taken his ark and defeated his people; and to convince them, that the gods they worshipped were weak and dead idols, and the God of *Israel* the only true and almighty God. Thus does God secure his own glory: and if he suffers sometimes his enemies to get the better, and things to fall out which seem to interfere with his glory, he at last exerts his power to the confusion of those that offend him, and to the honour of his holy name.

C H A P. VI.

I. **T**HE *Philistines* send back the ark of the covenant into the land of *Israel*, that they might be delivered from the plagues with which they were smitten; and with it an offering, which was a memorial of what had happened to them. II. The ark being brought to *Beth-jameth*, God slew many of that place for touching it, and presuming to look into it. III. From *Beth-shemesh* the ark was sent to *Kirjath-Jearim*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE reading of this chapter shews, that the triumph of the *Philistines* was of a very short duration; since God did not suffer his ark to stay long with them, and forced them to send it back with an offering; which expressed their dread of the God of *Israel*, and was a solemn acknowledgment of his power, and a memorial of the plagues with which he had smitten them. Thus did God confound the *Philistines*, and made them much more sensible of his power, after they had taken the ark; than he would have done if they had not taken it, and the *Israelites* had not been conquered. Even when God seems to neglect his own glory, he in the end
most

most signally and remarkably secures the interests of it, and sooner or later obliges his enemies to acknowledge his power. II. We may learn, even from what the priests of the *Philistines* said to that idolatrous people, to humble ourselves under the afflicting hand of God, and to endeavour without delay to appease his wrath, lest if we grow hardened under his corrections, they fall heavier upon us, and we sink under them. III. It is remarkable, that the *Philistines* resolved to put the ark into a new cart, drawn by two milch-cows, and let them go without guiding them either way. They thought by this means to make another trial, whether the evils that befel them came from God; imagining, that if the kine went the direct way to the land of *Israel*, that would be an argument that they had been smitten by the God of *Israel*. God was pleased, for their greater conviction, to accommodate himself to the notion of these superstitious people, and by the intervention of his providence, in a manner suitable to the advice of their priests, manifested his power as they thought he ought to manifest it. IV. What befel the men of *Beth-shemesb* for touching the ark, and looking into it, tended to produce reverence and fear in the *Israelites*; and to make them sensible, that if the Lord returned to dwell among them, they should take care not to provoke him to wrath, lest his presence might become as fatal to them as it was to the *Philistines*. It is a great advantage to have God present among us in the signs of his covenant, and pledges of his grace and favour; but this engages us to reverence that holy and righteous God, lest by offending him we expose ourselves to his vengeance.

C H A P. VII.

I. **S**AMUEL exhorts the *Israelites* to be converted, and to put away the idols from among them; which they did, and at the same time kept a solemn fast. II. After this they obtained a signal victory over the *Philistines*, by the intercession of that prophet.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE victory gained by the people of *Israel* over the *Philistines*, after they had been reconciled to God by humiliation, confession of sins, and fasting, and had put away their idols, teaches us, that God is always ready to be appeased, as soon as men sincerely humble themselves and forsake their sins. We see likewise in this history, that the people, terrified at the approach of the *Philistines*, had recourse to the intercession of *Samuel*, who by his prayers and sacrifices obtained a miraculous victory; and that the *Philistines*, affrighted and dispersed by dreadful thunder, were so defeated, that they never more assaulted the people of *Israel* while *Samuel* lived. The greatest blessing any people can enjoy, is to have wise rulers and such as fear God; the prayers of good men, and of the faithful servants of God, are of great efficacy; and for their sakes God often spares and blesses a nation. Lastly, The care that *Samuel* took to administer justice to the people, ought to be an example to judges and magistrates; and induce them to discharge the duties of their office with the same application, and the same integrity as *Samuel* performed his all the days of his life.

C H A P. VIII.

IN this chapter we have an account of the change in the government of the people of *Israel*, occasioned by the ill conduct of the sons of *Samuel*. This people, who had been governed till then by judges, raised up by God in an extraordinary manner, having desired a king, God was displeased at the request; however, he ordered *Samuel* to appoint one, after he had warned them of the evils that would befall them under this government, and the treatment they should meet with from their kings.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE account here given of the ill behaviour of the sons of *Samuel*, shews, I. That children born of godly parents do not always tread in their steps. II. That great evils befall a people, when those who have the administration of affairs act unjustly, and are corrupted by bribes. III. It must be observed, that though *Samuel's* sons abused their power, yet the *Israelites* were guilty of a great sin in asking a king; because by this behaviour, they shewed that they chose rather to be governed by a man, than to be governed immediately by the Lord, as they had been till that time. Such is the ingratitude and usual blindness of men, who mistake the favours of God, and are disgusted with them, and seek that which is to their hurt. IV. When the *Israelites* persisted in asking a king, God ordered *Samuel* to set one over them; but first warned them by him of the many inconveniences which would be the consequence of this change of government. God, in love to men, makes known to them his will and their duty; and forewarns them of the misfortunes they will bring upon themselves by

by following the guidance of their own will rather than his. But when they will not follow his wholesome counsels, but are obstinately bent upon their own resolutions, he hinders them not. By which means God permits many things which he does not approve of; and men are always the authors of all the evils which befall them.

C H A P. IX.

THE history of *Saul*, the first king of *Israel*, begins here. In this chapter we see upon what occasion *Saul* visited the prophet *Samuel*, and how God revealed to *Samuel*, that he was to anoint *Saul* king.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE chief observation we are to make here is, that God, who permitted the people of *Israel* to have a king over them, did not leave them at liberty to take whom they pleased, but would give them one himself. To this end he interposed, by a very particular act of providence, in this event. *Saul*, whilst he was seeking his father's asses, applied himself to the prophet *Samuel*; and God revealed to the prophet that *Saul* was to be their king. Thus God conducted *Saul* to *Samuel*, without either of them knowing what was to come to pass; that the establishment of *Saul* might appear to be the Lord's doing, and the *Israelites* might know, that though they had sinned in asking a king, God did, nevertheless, take care of them. God disposes all things to bring about the execution of his designs, and brings them about by ways which men think not of: his providence presides over all things; and, in particular, by him kings rule; and consequently we ought to submit ourselves to them.

C H A P. X.

I. **S**AMUEL anoints *Saul* king; and to convince him that he was called by God to that office, he foretels him of three things that should happen to him. II. Having assembled all the people at *Mizpeh*, he nominates and appoints *Saul* to be their king.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT is chiefly to be considered on this chapter is, that *Samuel* the prophet, to convince *Saul* that God had chosen him to rule over his people, gave him three signs; foretelling several remarkable things that would happen to him, and particularly that he should be inspired with the spirit of God. Besides this, God confirmed *Saul's* call to the kingly office, by causing the lot to fall on him; after which he was publicly declared king in the presence of all the people. All these strange things came to pass, that *Saul*, who could hardly believe God would make him king over his people, might be fully persuaded of the truth of it, and no longer doubt of the divine assistance; and that all the people might know that God had set him over them. So that in this history we see visible marks of the goodness of the Lord to the *Israelites*, and to *Saul*, as well as a proof of God's omniscience, and of his sovereign power in disposing all events. It is likewise to be observed in what happened to *Saul*, that when God calls any one, he grants him all necessary gifts for the discharge of the duties of his calling; and that if *Saul* had not fallen into disobedience, he would have continually enjoyed the divine favour and benediction. Thus it is with all those who are called by God, and prevented by his grace; they

have it in their power to secure and preserve the great privileges they enjoy ; and if they lose them, it is because they persevere not, but abuse the grace of God, and disobey the heavenly call.

C H A P. XI.

THERE are two parts in this chapter. I. An account of *Saul's* defeat of the *Ammonites*. II. His clemency towards those that would not own him for king.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THERE are three reflections to be made on this chapter: I. That as the king of the *Ammonites* had unjustly attacked the children of *Israel*, and imposed on them the most shameful and barbarous conditions ; God punished the haughtiness and cruelty of that prince, and proved that his providence humbles the proud and those who oppress others. II. That the beginning of *Saul's* reign was very happy and glorious ; since God made use of him to destroy the *Ammonites*, and deliver the men of *Jabesh*, who were reduced to the utmost extremity. This shews that God would have continued to bless this prince and his people, if they had not rendered themselves unworthy of his protection by their rebellion. III. The moderation and clemency of *Saul*, in not suffering certain persons to be put to death who had at first refused to own him for king, proves that *Saul* had at that time good notions, but that he did not always retain them. However, this example should teach every body, and particularly those in authority, to avoid resentment and revenge, and to pardon the offences that have been committed against them.

C H A P. XII.

I. **S**AMUEL being old, resigns the office of judge into the hands of the king and the people, solemnly protesting his integrity in the discharge of it. II. He reproaches the people with the sin they had committed in asking a king; and works a miracle which fills them all with terror and astonishment: after which he encourages them to serve God, and to persevere in obeying him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE protestations made by *Samuel*, in the presence of king *Saul* and the people, teach judges and magistrates with what integrity and disinterestedness they ought to behave themselves in the exercise of their office; and that those that do not justice, and who take bribes, are obliged to make restitution, and to remedy, as much as possible, all their unjust dealings. But the example of *Samuel* shews, that those judges, who have conscientiously discharged their duty, enjoy great comfort and satisfaction when they are going to give an account to God, the righteous judge, of their administration. II. What *Samuel* said to the *Israelites* on this occasion deserves our attention, when he represents to them the mercies they and their fathers had received from the hands of the almighty, and their abuse of them; that notwithstanding their frequent rebellions, and the sin they had lately committed in desiring a king, God had born with them, and delivered them out of many dangers, and was still ready to bless them and their king, provided they did not again provoke him by their sins. In all which we have very convincing proofs of the infinite goodness of the Lord towards men, and of his wonderful pa-

tience and long-suffering; and let us consider what foul ingratitude it would be in us, if, after we have received from him favours much more excellent than those conferred on the children of *Israel*, we should fall into rebellion and disobedience. III. *Samuel* said to the children of *Israel*, that if they would serve God faithfully he would protect them; but if they sinned against him, he would destroy both them and their king. Which teaches us, that states, where religion and justice flourish and abound, are blessed of God; but that he never fails to punish princes and people who provoke him by their sins. IV. We observe *Samuel's* great tenderness and affection for the people. After he had been a long time their prophet and judge, he declared he never would, as long as he lived, cease to pray for them, and shew them the right way. This grave and affecting discourse of the prophet, expresses the sentiments of all faithful pastors and good magistrates, who have the most tender affection for those committed to their trust, pray for them continually, and never grow tired of shewing them the true and the right way, which they must take to be happy.

C H A P. XIII.

I. **J**ONATHAN, the son of *Saul*, having smote the garrison of the *Philistines*, they declared war against the *Israelites*. II. *Saul* offers a sacrifice at *Gilgal*, without staying for *Samuel*; which he was severely reprimanded for by that prophet, who declared to him that his kingdom would not last.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE see in this chapter, that as God had promised to deliver his people from the *Philistines* by the hand of *Saul*, he suffered the war to break

break out again between them. At the beginning of this war *Saul* and his subjects were much alarmed; but God granted them a victory by *Jonathan* the son of *Saul*. But what we are chiefly to observe here is the action of king *Saul*, who would offer a sacrifice without staying for the prophet *Samuel*. Now though this action does not appear at first sight very criminal, and *Saul* even attempted to excuse it; the judgment which God, who knew *Saul's* heart, passed upon it, and the punishment that *Samuel* denounced against it, shew that that prince offered the sacrifice, not only through an indiscreet haste, but likewise out of a principle of defiance and rebellion against the commandment of God, *Samuel* having expressly forbidden him to sacrifice till he came; besides, that this proceeding of *Saul* might have been of bad consequence, and an ill precedent for the people. God would have us always to adhere inviolably to what he commands, and not to depart from it upon any pretence whatever; we must never seek excuses, nor make use of any pleas, when God commands; since nothing provokes the Lord more than the disobeying his orders. Moreover, the rejecting of *Saul* shews, that those whom God has chosen, and to whom he has granted particular favours, and who have made a good beginning, may lose all those advantages, if they render themselves unworthy of them, and may be at last rejected by God as *Saul* was; which ought to keep even those who have piety and zeal continually within the bounds of humility and fear.

C H A P. XIV.

I. **J**ONATHAN attacks a garrison of the *Philistines*, puts all their army to flight, and gains the victory over them. II. *Sau'*, pursuing the *Philistines*, causes all the people to take an oath that they

would eat nothing till the evening ; but *Jonathan*, being ignorant of the oath, eat some honey in a forest ; for which reason, his father *Saul* would have put him to death, but the people hindered him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are here to observe, I. The courage and piety of *Jonathan*, who resolved to attack the *Philistines* ; but before he put his design in execution, he gave himself a sign, by which he was to judge whether the Lord would give him success. II. The success that God gave to his enterprize, shewed that this prince and his enterprize were acceptable to God ; the defeat of the garrison, and the earthquake, putting the *Philistines* into such consternation and disorder, that they slew one another, and the *Israelites* made a great slaughter among them. Though God was provoked against *Saul*, he was pleased, notwithstanding, to grant him this victory over the idolators, and upon that occasion to deliver the people of *Israel* by the means of *Jonathan*, who was a virtuous prince and one that feared God. God sometimes grants his favours to persons that are unworthy of them ; not for their own sakes but for his own glory, and for the love he bears to those that fear him. The oath which *Saul* made his army take, not to eat any thing all that day, suggests to us these four reflections ; I. That this oath was taken rashly, and had like to have been attended with fatal consequences ; which shews, that we ought carefully to avoid rash and inconsiderate vows and oaths. II. The second observation is, that God gave no answer to *Saul* when he consulted him, and permitted *Jonathan*, who had not taken the oath, and was innocent, to be discovered by lot ; to make *Saul* sensible of his sin in making the people take a rash oath, and to shew how much an oath ought to be respected and strictly to be observed.

III. We

III. We may take notice of the conduct of *Saul*, who, though disobedient to the commands of God, yet shewed a great zeal in forbidding the people to eat of the blood, and even ordering his son *Jonathan* to be put to death. This is the character of hypocrites, who judge severely of others, and appear very zealous for the glory of God in some things; but do not judge and condemn themselves, and in things of greater importance break the commandments of the Lord. Lastly, God delivered *Jonathan*, and, after he had made him his instrument to destroy the *Philistines*, did not suffer him to be put to death. This shews, that we should never condemn the innocent, nor commit any other act of injustice, under the pretence of vows or oaths or any other consideration; but should rather defend and protect innocence upon all occasions.

C H A P. XV.

SAUL making war upon the *Amalekites*, spares *Agag* their king, and the best part of the spoil, against the express order of the Lord; whereupon *Samuel*, without regarding *Saul's* excuses, declares to him that God had rejected him; and then ordered *Agag* to be put to death, and went away to *Ramal*, without ever seeing *Saul* any more.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are several things of great importance to be considered on the history that is related in this chapter. I. The first concerns the sin of *Saul*, who, contrary to the order of God, spared the king of the *Amalekites*, and the best of the spoil; and the manner in which *Samuel* rebuked that prince for his disobedience. From hence we learn, that it is never lawful to explain the commandments of God accord-

ing to our own fancies, nor to omit the least part of them upon any pretence ; but that we must obey, in simplicity of heart, all that God commands us, without seeking for reasons to dispense with them. *Saul* attempted to excuse himself, saying, that he had obeyed the commands of God, and pleading his intention to honour God by sacrificing the beasts that he had spared. But the prophet rejected all these excuses, and censured him very much for his disobedience. 'There' is no excuse can justify us in the violation of God's command, made known to us in a clear and express manner. This teaches us likewise, that it is in vain to pretend to honour God, when we depart from what he has commanded ; that God does not regard the external homage we render him, whatever appearance of zeal it may carry with it, when we do not obey him ; that obedience is better than sacrifice ; and that it is a sin as great as idolatry to rebel against his word. III. We are to observe, that *Saul*, terrified at the sharp reproofs and denunciations of *Samuel*, earnestly intreated him to intercede for him, that his sin might be pardoned, and to stay with him. But God was not moved with his expressions of repentance, because his repentance was not sincere, and the fear of being deprived of his kingdom, and falling into disgrace with the people, were his chief motives. For this reason *Samuel* insisted upon it that God had rejected him, and would never see him any more. The sorrow of the wicked is not always true repentance, it is often nothing but a worldly sorrow ; and therefore God, who knows the heart, disregards it, and forsakes them when the measure of their iniquity is full.

C H A P. XVI.

I. **T**HE prophet *Samuel* anoints *David* king over the people of *Israel*. II. *Saul* being troubled

bled by an evil spirit, *David* was sent for to relieve him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are two remarkable events in this chapter : the first is the choice God made of *David* to be king ; upon which we are to consider two things : one is, that God ordered the same prophet to anoint him that had anointed *Saul* ; that it might not be in the least doubted but *David* was called to the kingdom as *Saul* had been : the other is, that though *David* was the youngest of the sons of *Jesse*, God caused him to be anointed by *Samuel*, because he was a man after his own heart, and took him from his sheep to set him upon a throne. The instruction we receive from hence is, that God makes choice of those who have a good and upright heart ; and, as the prophet *Samuel* says, that *the Lord does not see as man seeth ; that man looketh upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.* The other event related in this chapter is, that God permitted *Saul* to be troubled with an evil spirit, that is, by a dismal melancholy ; and that *David*, on the contrary, was filled with the spirit of God ; and that God even made use of *David* to relieve *Saul* when the fit came upon him. By this means providence prepared the way for *David's* elevation to the throne, making him agreeable at the court of *Saul*. Lastly, The example of *Saul*, who, after he had received the spirit of God, was given up to an evil one, represents the state of those who render themselves unworthy of the grace of God : they are deprived of it, and reduced to a condition still more wretched ; as our Lord has said in the gospel, *The unclean spirit enters again into them, and their last state becomes worse than the first.*

C H A P. XVII.

I. **T**HE *Philistines* make war upon the *Israelites*, and a giant named *Goliath* defies the people of *Israel*, and challenges any one that would dare to fight with him; which no body had courage to attempt. II. At last, *David*, trusting in the divine assistance, offers to fight with *Goliath*, and slays him; and the *Israelites* obtain a great victory over the *Philistines*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE must observe here, I. That God suffered the *Philistines* to declare war against the *Israelites*, and *Goliath* to threaten and insult them; that *David* might have an opportunity to make himself known, and to deliver the people of *Israel*. II. That none of the people durst fight with *Goliath*; which served to enhance the courage of *David*, and the glory of his victory. III. That *David* himself was not at first concerned in the war, and only went to the army by accident, his father sending him to enquire after his brethren. In all this the particular hand of providence is visible, which thus disposed circumstances for the exaltation of *David*, when he thought nothing of it; and, from the way of life he had till then been engaged in, made him the deliverer of his people, and afterwards their king. IV. We must admire the resolution and courage of *David*, who offered to engage *Goliath*, without being terrified by his threatnings, or discouraged by his own brethren; and above all, his great trust in God, whose assistance he had already experienced. Lastly, *David's* wonderful success in a particular manner engages our attention; since with no other weapon than a sling he slew the giant, and obtained a glorious victory over the

the *Philistines*. In all which it visibly appears, that God assisted *David* in an extraordinary manner, and at the same time, that he was pleased to vindicate his own honour, which *Goliath* had attacked, and make those idolators sensible, after a very signal manner, that he was the almighty God. Thus also we see how God helps those that trust in him, and makes use of means in appearance very weak to bring down the pride of the wicked, and to destroy the powers which seem the most formidable.

C H A P. XVIII.

WE see here, I. The strict friendship between *Jonathan* the son of *Saul*, and *David*. II. *David's* great reputation at *Saul's* court, and the acclamations of the people after he had slain *Goliath*, and thereby vanquished the *Philistines*. III. *Saul's* jealousy on this account, which made him attempt to kill *David*, and endeavour to make him fall into the hands of the *Philistines*, by promising to give him his daughter in marriage. Lastly, The marriage of *David* with *Michal*, one of the daughters of *Saul*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **I**N *Jonathan* the son of *Saul*, and in *David*, we have an extraordinary instance of a tender and sincere friendship; and this example is the more surprising, as *Jonathan* might expect to reign after his father *Saul*, and yet set his whole heart and esteem upon *David*, without any regard to his private interest. A friendship is easily contracted between disinterested and virtuous persons, and men of virtue and religion are always desirous to be united to such as are like themselves. II. We see that not only *Jonathan*, but all the people had conceived an high esteem for *David*; which appeared on their acclamations after his victory; which was so ordered by providence, to dispose

dispose the *Israelites* to submit themselves one day to *David*. III. *Saul* was extremely jealous of *David*, and conceived so violent a hatred against him, that he attempted to kill him: And when he found he could not succeed in taking away his life by his own hand, he endeavoured to make him fall by the hands of the *Philistines*, promising to give him in marriage his eldest daughter, and afterwards his second daughter, upon condition he would make war upon those enemies of God's people, and kill a certain number of them. This whole proceeding proves *Saul's* extreme wickedness, and that he was artful, treacherous and cruel; but from hence we learn likewise, that amidst all the success *David* met with, providence prepared crosses, that were to serve him for a trial. IV. This history shews, that notwithstanding all that *Saul* did to destroy *David* he was forced to give him his daughter *Michal*; that God blessed *David* every day with some new success; and the snares *Saul* laid for him turned to his own confusion and to *David's* glory, and served to endear him more and more to the people. Thus we see that nothing can hurt those whom God loves; that he always watches over them for good; and all that the wicked undertake against them turns to their good and advantage.

C H A P. XIX.

I. **J**ONATHAN endeavours to pacify king *Saul* his father, who was exasperated against *David*, and prevails upon him to send for him again. II. But a little afterwards *Saul* attempted again to kill *David*, which obliged his wife *Michal* to convey him away. III. He flies to the prophet *Samuel*, where he is pursued by the messengers of *Saul*, and by *Saul* himself, but is wonderfully preserved by God. •

R E F L E C T I O N S.

JONATHAN gave noble proofs of his friendship for *David*, and of his virtue, when he used his utmost endeavours to pacify his father, and spake with so much respect and resolution in behalf of his friend, to reconcile his father to him. By this means he discharged his duty to his friend, and at the same time to his father, by inspiring him with more just sentiments. Thus ought we to take the part of the innocent, when persecuted unjustly, never to be backward in our good offices towards others, and to use all means to appease those that are enraged. The proceeding of *Saul* with *David* is an argument of a very corrupt heart; since, though he had promised, even with an oath, not to hurt him, he conceived a new aversion against him, after he had conquered the *Philistines* a second time, and would have taken away his life. Persons who are arrived, like *Saul*, to a certain pitch of wickedness, and are possessed with a spirit of hatred and jealousy, seldom return to more reasonable sentiments; and though they sometimes appear to be much altered, and grown mild, and inclined to forgive, their wicked temper soon shews itself. However, *Saul*, with all his malice, could not hurt *David*, and though he sent men to take him in his own house, God secured him again from the danger that threatened him, by the means of his wife *Michal*. And when *Saul* himself pursued him to *Ramah*, the spirit of God came upon him, and he returned without doing him any injury. God has many ways to protect the righteous and innocent; sometimes he stops the proceedings of the wicked against good men by calming their passions, and sometimes by depriving them of the means, and even altering their will to hurt his children. This is a powerful motive to the faithful to hope in God, and confide in his assistance in all states and conditions. *Da-*

vid gives thanks to God for his deliverance in the fifty ninth Psalm.

C H A P. XX.

I. **D**AVID being obliged to fly, complains to *Jonathan* of the injustice of *Saul* his father; and *Jonathan* promises him to discover the sentiments of *Saul*, and to make them known to him by a sign which they agreed upon. II. *Jonathan* having found that his father was bent upon destroying *David*, lets him know it; and they give each other new proofs of their affection, vowing perpetual friendship; and then, full of the deepest sorrow, take their leave.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter, the friendship between *Jonathan* and *David* is the chief thing to be considered. *Jonathan* made another attempt to cure his father of his unjust hatred against *David*; and though his father represented to him that he would never come to the crown if *David* lived, he had no regard to his own interest, but continued to speak in behalf of *David*; till at length, perceiving that *Saul* could not be pacified, and that his hatred and malice against *David* rather increased, he warned him of the danger that threatened him, and took his leave of him, after they had renewed their vows of eternal friendship and shed many tears. In this history we see what are the duties and effects of true friendship. Here we learn, that true friends are a treasure that cannot be too highly valued; that even after their death their memory should be dear to us, and that our affection should extend to their posterity, as *David*'s did to *Mephibosheth* the son of *Jonathan*. From what passed between *Jonathan* and *David*, it appears that *Jonathan* was persuaded *David* would one day sit upon the throne;

throne; and yet he was not in the least jealous of him, because he knew it was the will of God. These sentiments of *Jonathan* express the greatness of his soul and give proof his piety. True and solid friendship is founded upon virtue, and instead of being jealous of the advantages of our friends, makes their happiness our joy and satisfaction. Let us observe, lastly, that *Saul*, instead of growing cool, and hearkning to the wise remonstrances of *Jonathan*, was the more enraged, and even went so far as to attempt to kill him. Thus this prince grew worse and worse; which is generally the case of those who forsake God, and give themselves up to their unruly passions.

H A P. XXI.

I. **D**AVID flies to *Nob* to *Abimelech* the priest, who gave him of the shew-bread, and the sword of *Goliath*. II. After this, he retreats to *Achish* king of the *Philistines*, where, being known, he counterfeited madness to save his life.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

HERE begins the history of the persecutions and afflictions to which *David* was exposed after he had retired from the court of *Saul*, and by which God was pleased to try him before he ascended the throne. There are two things to be considered upon *David's* flight to *Abimelech* the priest; one is, that God took care of *David*, and gave him assistance in his banishment: the other is a remark made by our Lord in the gospel, upon *Abimelech's* giving *David* the shew-bread, which the priests only had a right to eat of. From this example *Jesus Christ* inferred, that the ceremonial laws were not of so great importance, but they might be dispensed with in cases of necessity

necessity. *David's* counterfeiting madness, when he was discovered by the *Philistines* in the city of *Gath*, must be considered as a weakness not altogether free from sin; since *David* shewed thereby that he did not sufficiently depend upon the promises of the Lord. This is a warning to us, never to have recourse to evil means, and to do nothing unworthy of our character to deliver ourselves from the dangers which threaten us. However, though this means *David* made use of was not right, yet God permitted it to succeed; which shews, that he in mercy bears with the infirmities of those who fear him. The thirty fourth Psalm was composed on this occasion, and so was the fifty sixth.

C H A P. XXX.

I. **D**AVID retreats to the cave of *Adullam*; from whence he goes to the king of *Moab*, and afterwards into the land of *Judab*. II. *Doeg* accuses *Abimelech* before *Saul*, for giving victuals to *David* and his men; which occasioned the death of *Abimelech*, and of fourscore and five priests, and the destruction of the town of *Nob*, where *Abimelech* dwelt.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I N this, as well as some of the preceeding and following chapters, we behold *David* a fugitive, and forced to wander from place to place; but wherever he goes, we see him guided and assisted by his almighty defender. But what we are here chiefly to observe is, the wicked action of *Doeg*, who by his false reports occasioned *Saul* to put *Abimelech* and eighty five priests to death, and to put the city of *Nob* to the sword: on which we should make the following reflections; I. That great evils are occasioned by calumny

lunny and false reports; that therefore, none can have too great a horror and aversion to this sin, and that the great, in particular, should be cautious how they give ear to slanderers and flatterers. II. That *Saul*, giving credit to *Doeg's* accusation, condemned *Abimelech* and the other priests to death, without hearing what they had to say in their justification, or paying the least regard to their character: another instance of his impiety and injustice. III. That, as *Saul's* guards refused to kill the priests, we ought not to obey princes, when their commands are evidently contrary to justice and religion. IV. The fourth reflection regards the wickedness and cruelty of *Doeg*, who, when he had prejudiced *Saul* against the innocent, and found his guards refused to lay their hands on the Lord's ministers, slew them himself. Such is the character of wicked men and detractors; they stick at nothing, and by their false accusations lay themselves under a fatal necessity of doing every thing to support their calumnies, and destroy the innocent. V. It is to be remarked, that *Abimelech* had done nothing in the least degree criminal, and yet it cost him and the rest of the priests their lives. God for wise reasons sometimes suffers the innocent to be oppressed; but in this particular event, we see God's denunciations against *Eli* the high priest and his posterity accomplished; as *Abimelech* was of that family. Lastly, It is evident that *David* was very sensibly affected with this misfortune, which he had been the innocent occasion of; and his kind reception of *Abiathar*, the son of *Abimelech*, was a sign that *David* had a tender heart; and is a lesson to us, to be concerned for those to whom any evil happens, especially when we have been the occasion of it. To the reading of this chapter we must add that of the fifty second *Psalms*, where *David* expresses his detestation of this action of *Doeg*, and denounces the judgments of God against him.

C H A P. XXIII.

I. **D**AVID delivers the city of *Keilab*; and being warned that the inhabitants of that town would deliver him to *Saul*, he retreats to the wilderness of *Ziph*, where he had another interview with *Jonathan*. II. *Saul* having notice that he was there, pursued him, and shut him up so closely that he would have taken him, if he had not been obliged to return quickly, upon the *Philistines* invading the land of *Israel*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE circumstances we are to consider in this history are the following: I. That God was every where with *David*, even when persecuted and a fugitive, since he made use of him to deliver *Keilab* from the *Philistines*. II. That *David*, fearing the inhabitants of *Keilab* would deliver him into the hands of *Saul*, asked counsel of God; who answered, that they would deliver him. This particular is very remarkable, and clearly proves, that God knows what men will do, even before the design is formed. III. It must be remarked, in the third place, that *David* having retreated to *Ziph*, and the inhabitants of the place informing *Saul* of it, he would have been taken, if *Saul* had not been obliged to return hastily to defend his own country against the *Philistines*. *David* was no where secure from danger; but every where met with persons who either persecuted or betrayed him. This is often the condition of those whom God loves: but providence procures them unforeseen deliverances, and when they think their ruin inevitable, he delivers them in a way they little think of; as *David* experienced on this occasion. Thus God preserves his children, sometimes by forewarn-

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ing them of the dangers that threaten them, and sometimes by throwing obstacles in the way of their enemies, to hinder them from executing their cruel and unjust designs. God was pleased to put *David* upon divers trials, before he set him on the throne, to make him more humble and more observant of his duty, as he himself owns in his *Psalms*; where he says, *That it was good for him that he had been afflicted*, and where he so often praises the Lord for happily delivering him from all his troubles. In the fifty fourth *Psalms*, we may see what sentiments the deliverance God vouchsafed *David* at this time raised in his breast.

C H A P. XXIV.

SAUL pursuing *David* to the wilderness of *Engedi*, entered into a cave, where *David* had an opportunity to take away his life, but would not do it; which when *Saul* perceived, he acknowledged *David's* innocence, and blessed him, and made him swear he would not destroy his posterity.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E history related in this chapter sets before us a surprising instance of mildness and moderation. *David* had it in his power to kill *Saul*, his cruel and unjust persecutor, and did not do it; he would not even suffer his people to do him any harm, and spoke to him with all the humility and respect imaginable. A good man never delivers himself by unlawful means; but uses even those who do him the greatest mischief with meekness and gentleness, and instead of revenging himself, returns all the good he can for evil. It is remarkable that *Saul*, notwithstanding he hated he bore to *David*, was so

affected with this treatment, that he wept, and was even forced to bless him, and to own that *David* was more righteous than he, and to declare openly that God would reward his virtue, and make him king. A mild, prudent, and gentle behaviour, is of great efficacy in pacifying those who are the most prejudiced against us, and by humbling ourselves we soften the hardest hearts. This ought to induce us the more to the practice of those virtues, which besides are so conformable to our calling and duty as Christians, and which *Jesus Christ* our blessed redeemer has so expressly recommended to us, both by his precepts and example. However, observe *Saul* soon changed his sentiments, and again persecuted *David*. The wicked are sometimes moved with a sense of their guilt, and confess their faults; but they quickly return to their former sentiments, and harden themselves in their wickedness.

C H A P. XXV.

AN account of the death of the prophet *Samuel*, and of the brutish manner in which *Nabal* received the people sent to him by *David*; which made *David* vow the destruction of *Nabal's* house; but he was pacified by *Abigail*, the wife of *Nabal*, whom he married after his death.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE first thing seen in this chapter is the death of *Samuel*, who was, in his time, a great prophet and an excellent magistrate; illustrious for the holiness of his life, his miracles, his great zeal, uprightness, and inviolable attachment to justice; remarkable for his tender affection to the children of *Israel*, and for several extraordinary and miraculous actions. The memory of this holy man
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ought to be had in reverence in the church, his virtues to be made our example, and the ministers of religion and magistrates should propose him for their pattern. There are two reflections to be made on the history of *Nabal*: I. The example of *Nabal*, who by his greediness and churlishness had like to have caused the ruin of his whole family, should teach us, that covetousness and ill-nature may bring upon us great evils; wherefore those vices ought to be shunned, and we ought always to behave ourselves with civility and good-nature. Besides this, we learn from *Nabal's* death, that avarice, anger and drunkenness, are generally attended with fatal consequences, and even sometimes occasion the death of those who run into these excesses. II. The other thing here demanding our attention is, that *David*, offended with the proceeding of *Nabal*, and transported with rage, vowed to destroy him and all his house: which he would have done if he had not been pacified by the prudence and mild behaviour of *Abigail*. From whence we may learn, that it is dangerous to suffer ourselves to be carried away by passion and resentment; that wise and moderate counsels are the most safe; that oaths made in anger, and which engage us to any thing evil, ought not to be kept; that what is done in a passion, often occasions repentance and remorse of conscience; and lastly, that we ought to thank God when he keeps us from offending him, and from executing our evil intentions.

C H A P. XXVI.

SAUL pursuing *David* into the country of the *Ziphites*, *David* entered into his camp by night, where he could have slain him, and would not, though he was persuaded to it; but contented himself with letting *Saul* know, that he could have taken
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away his life; which so affected *Saul*, that he was forced to own himself in the wrong for pursuing *David*, and made him bless him.

REFLECTIONS.

I. **I**N this chapter we find *Saul* again pursuing *David*, and with three thousand men going in quest of him into the wilderness of *Ziph*; though but a little before he had acknowledged *David*'s innocence, and seemed reconciled with him. Wicked men seldom change; and the repentance and fair promises of those who have arrived to a certain degree of wickedness, is very little to be depended upon.

II. We have here a fresh instance of the piety and moderation of *David*, who when he had a second opportunity of killing *Saul*, would not do it. This proceeding was yet the more commendable in *David*, because he had spared *Saul* once before; and this prince, though moved with his generosity, ceased not to persecute him as before. Let us learn from hence to avoid revenge, never to return evil for evil, and never to be weary of behaving ourselves with gentleness towards those persons that treat us with the greatest injustice, though they continue their evil machinations against us. From that action of *David* we may learn in particular to reverence kings and princes; that their persons are sacred, and that we ought to do nothing contrary to the allegiance we owe them, though they should be wanting in their duty. Lastly, The effect that *David*'s moderation had upon *Saul*, shews us, how powerfully innocence, meekness and humility work upon those that would do us harm; and that the worst of men are forced at last to declare in favour of the righteous. But supposing by this means we should not be able to pacify those that hate us, we shall secure

cure to ourselves the divine favour; for, as *David* says, the Lord will reward every one according to his righteousness.

C H A P. XXVII.

DAVID, as he could not trust to *Saul*, and found himself no way secure in the land of *Israel*, retreats to *Achish*, the king of the *Philistines*, who gives him *Ziklag*; from whence *David* makes inroads upon the neighbouring people.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE see in this chapter, I. That while *David* was a fugitive God took care of him, and procured him a retreat in the country of the *Philistines*, where his name must needs be odious; and that during his stay there, he obtained several advantages over the neighbouring people, the enemies of *Israel*. II. We must remember, that as the people on whom *David* made these inroads, were some of those nations which God had commanded the *Jews* to destroy, *David* might lawfully make war upon them; and the more, since God had called him to it by making him king. However, *David's* behaviour was not without sin, when he told the king of the *Philistines* he was making incursions upon the land of *Judah*, which was not true. So that this example of *David* does not authorise lying, falshood and deceit; and if these vices were to be condemned in a *Jew*, they are still more unworthy of a Christian; who, living under the law of love and truth, ought to be very far from lying, and at all times behave with candor, simplicity and sincerity.

C H A P. XXVIII.

SAUL being attacked by the *Philistines*, and finding that God gave him no answer, applies himself to a woman that used divination, and prays her to shew him the prophet *Samuel*. A spirit in the likeness of the prophet appears, which foretels his death, and the death of his sons, and the defeat of his army.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE history related in this chapter is very remarkable; we see here, I. That *Saul*, being attacked by the *Philistines*, would have enquired of the Lord; but the Lord gave him no answer. As it was then too late for *Saul* to consult God, so there is a time when it is too late for sinners to prevent their ruin. The deplorable condition this unhappy prince was in at that time, is a lively representation of the state of sinners forsaken by God, and ripe for punishment. II. We see, that, when *Saul* was reduced to this extremity, instead of humbling himself before God, he fell into another sin, having recourse to a person that practised a damnable art, which he himself, agreeable to the law of God, had forbid upon pain of death. This proceeding of *Saul* proves, that he had not consulted God with sentiments of true repentance. This is the true character of sinners, who fill up the measure of their iniquities; they grow continually worse and worse, they add hypocrisy to impiety, and commit new and greater abominations, at the very time the severest judgments are going to fall upon their devoted heads. III. As to the action itself of the woman which *Saul* consulted, it is to be observed, that the art she made use of was vain and sinful; that she

she had no power to make the dead prophet appear; and that it would be the greatest folly in the world to imagine that it is in the power of man to bring back the dead again, and get information from them of what is to come to pass. Nevertheless, God suffered a body to appear in the likeness of that prophet, and to foretel *Saul's* defeat, and the exact time of his death. God thought fit by this means to punish *Saul's* impiety, and make the sin he was committing prove the means of his punishment; and by this means it appeared likewise that his death proceeded from God. Thus God does sometimes, for the trial and punishment of men, suffer error and delusion to succeed, *that they all might be damned who believed not the truth.* Lastly, We see in the person of *Saul*, and the horror he was in upon this occasion, how wretched the condition of those is who are forsaken by God. And since it is despising the voice of God, and being hardened in wickedness, that brings men to this state, we ought to fear bringing ourselves into it through impiety and hardness of heart as *Saul* did.

C H A P. XXIX.

THE chiefs of the army of the *Philistines*, that went to fight with the *Israelites*, having observed in the review of their army that *David* and his men were with them, obliged *Achish* their king to send him back to *Ziklag*, for fear he should join the *Israelites* against the *Philistines*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE chief consideration we have to make here is, that *David* being engaged to go to the war with the *Philistines* against the *Israelites*, and finding himself thereby reduced to a necessity either of fighting

fighting against his own countrymen, or betraying the king of the *Philistines*; God, in kindness to *David*, delivered him from the temptation to which he would have been exposed, by permitting the chiefs of the army of the *Philistines* to require him to be sent away. The proceeding of *David* on this occasion was not consistent with sincerity, as he had made the king of the *Philistines* believe he would fight with them against the *Israelites*. However, providence delivered him from all these difficulties, by the *Philistines* themselves insisting upon his return: by which means *David* was kept from the commission of sin; from having any share in the defeat of the *Israelites*, and from being in the engagement where *Saul* was killed; and was in a condition to deliver the town of *Ziklag*, which had been surprised in his absence by the *Amalekites*, as appears in the following chapter. Thus providence disposes events for the good of those whom God loves, and the Lord gives them a happy issue out of the most dangerous and disagreeable circumstances; prevents their falling into sin, and delivers them from the temptations which they would not have had strength to withstand.

C H A P. XXX.

I. **D** AVID arriving at *Ziklag*, finds the town burnt, and his wives carried away prisoners, with all the people that were in it. II. Being informed that the *Amalekites* had done this mischief, he pursues them, recovers what they had taken, and likewise great spoils from them, which were divided between those who went out to the war, and those that remained in the camp with the baggage.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

UPON this history we may make the following reflections; I. That the city of *Ziklag*, which belonged to *David*, was taken by the *Amalekites*, with the people that were in it; and that *David*, at his return, had like to have been stoned by the people. This was a very severe trial for *David*; but it was the last he was to undergo before he ascended the throne. II. *David*, upon this occasion, shewed his piety in consulting the Lord to know what he was to do: and God having ordered him to pursue the *Amalekites*, he recovered all that they had taken away, delivered his wives, and took likewise from them a considerable booty. By which means the evil that betel *David* turned to his advantage and to his greater glory; and thus those who in their troubles make the will of God their rule and guide, never fail to experience his favour and protection.

C H A P. XXXI.

THIS chapter contains an account of the defeat of the *Israelites* by the *Philistines*, and of the death of *Saul* and his sons, whose bodies were hung upon the walls of *Beth-shan*; but were afterwards buried by the inhabitants of *Jab-sh*. Here ends the history of *Saul*, and the first book of *Samuel*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. THE death of *Saul* deserves very seriously to be attended to. The circumstances of *Saul's* death were extremely tragical, as he was the cause of it himself; as his three sons were slain in the battle by the *Philistines*, and his body, and the
bodies

bodies of his sons, were treated with the utmost ignominy and contempt, the *Philistines* hanging them upon the walls of the city *Bethshan*. The scripture observes, that *Saul* died thus because he had not obeyed the commandment of the Lord; and in particular, because he had consulted the woman at *Endor* that had a familiar spirit. Thus this prince, who had been chosen by God, and had begun so well, made a miserable end; and the threatnings denounced against him by God, on several occasions, were put in execution. Thus it always has been and always will be with the divine denunciations, whether against particular persons, or sinners in general. This event ought to inspire us with a wholesome fear, and make us own that those whom God has enriched with favours, and who abuse them, are at last abandoned by him, and made examples of his indignation. II. When we see the sons of *Saul*, and in particular *Jonathan*, a man of so much piety and virtue, perish with him; we must remember, that the innocent are sometimes involved with the guilty in temporal judgments; which God does for just reasons, particularly to make good men happy by taking them out of this world. III. We have seen on this occasion that the people of *Israel* were beaten by the *Philistines*, God having thought fit to chastise that people in proportion as he punished *Saul*. For the same reason, God makes his judgments to fall upon the people, as well as upon princes; in which we have reason to adore the justice, the wisdom, and the goodness of God.

The end of the first book of SAMUEL.

T H E
S E C O N D B O O K
O F
S A M U E L.

A R G U M E N T.

In the second book of Samuel, we have the history of the reign of David, which contains the space of about forty years.

C H A P. I.

I. **D**AVID receives news of the death of *Saul*, and the defeat of the *Israelites* by the *Philistines*. II. He puts to death the person who had taken away *Saul's* life. III. He laments his death and the death of *Jonathan*.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. **H**ERE let us make this general reflection ; that *David*, having waited till God thought fit to deliver him from the unjust persecutions of *Saul*, and to give him the kingdom of *Israel*, without impatience, and without attempting to make use of any unlawful means to deliver himself ; providence directed events in such a manner, that *Saul* died without *David's* contributing in the least towards it ; so that *David* ascended the throne innocently and lawfully.

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Whatever condition we are in, we must resign ourselves to the guidance of providence, and calmly wait, without doing any thing contrary to justice and a good conscience, till the designs of providence are brought about. II. The action of *David* in putting to death the man who brought him the news of *Saul's* death, is to be considered as an act of justice: since that person could not without a crime kill that prince, and ought rather to have used all possible means to preserve his life. III. We may observe here the piety and the honest heart of *David*, who on this occasion behaved with the same temper he had done in *Saul's* life-time, and was so much concerned at his death, though it secured him from any further persecutions, and caused him to ascend the throne. Thus does every man of sincere piety and solid virtue behave: Whatever injuries his enemies have done him, how wicked soever their lives have been, and though the advantages arising from their misfortunes be ever so great, he never rejoices, but is rather grieved at them. IV. In *David's* lamentation upon the death of *Jonathán*, his dear friend, we see the character of true friendship. Sincere and virtuous friends, such as *Jonathán* was with respect to *David*, are the greatest blessings, except the grace and love of God, which we can enjoy in this world; and the greatest loss which we can sustain, is to be deprived of them.

C H A P. II.

I. **S**AUL being dead, *David* is acknowledged king by the tribe of *Judah*; and thanks the men of *Jabesh* for burying *Saul* and his sons. II. *Abner* sets up *Ish-bosheth* the son of *Saul*, for king over the other tribes. III. This gave occasion to a war, in which those that joined *Ish-bosheth* were defeated

feated by the people of *David*, and *Abner* killed *Asabel* the brother of *Joab*, general of king *David*'s army: after which the two armies retired.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **D**AVID gave proof of his piety, and the respect he bore to *Saul*, even after his death, in returning thanks to the people of *Jabesh* for interring the bodies of *Saul* and his sons. II. God, according to his promises, set *David* upon the throne when *Saul* was dead; but he did not reign at first over all the tribes of *Israel*, and was even obliged to carry on a war several years against the house of *Saul*; in which he several times gained the advantage. God was pleased to exercise *David* with new trials, before he made him enjoy that rest and prosperity which he had promised him; which he did to make him the more sensible of his dependence upon God for the kingdom. This represents the state of the children of God in this world, and the conduct of providence towards them. He has made them great and precious promises, and never fails to fulfil them; but he exposes them first to many trials, and at length he fully accomplishes all that he has promised. What *Abner* did to *Asabel*, to prevent his being under a necessity of killing him, teaches us to avoid, as much as we are able, doing evil to another, and especially shedding blood. The same is again remarkable in the cool and prudent behaviour of *Abner*, who did all he could to prevent the two armies from engaging again and pursuing each other. Christians should be still more ready and desirous to put an end to wars, and to prevent the effusion of the blood of their Christian brethren, and to procure upon all occasions a reconciliation, and restore peace and concord.

C H A P. III.

HERE we have, I. The names of the children that were born to *David* in *Hebron*. II. An account how *Abner*, who was general of the army of *Ish-bosheth* the son of *Saul*, and who till then had made war against *David*, forsook the party of *Ish-bosheth* to join that of *David*. III. *Joab*, the general of *David*'s army, being angry at this, and jealous of *Abner*, slew him treacherously, to revenge the death of his brother *Achish*, whom *Abner* had killed. IV. *David* being informed what *Joab* had done was greatly displeased with it; but could not at that time punish *Joab*, because his authority was not sufficiently confirmed.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **O**UR first reflection is, that *David* having married several wives, according to the custom introduced among the *Jews*, contrary to the first institution of marriage, and having had several children by them; these children were the occasion afterwards of many misfortunes in his family, and instruments in God's hand to punish him. These were the usual consequences of the evil custom of having several wives; and this consideration proves, that the laws of marriage, which *Jesus Christ* has restored to the purity of their first institution, are very just, and highly necessary to the happiness of mankind. II. The second reflection is, that *Abner*, provoked at the reproach of *Ish-bosheth*, embraced *David*'s party, and advised the rest of the tribes of *Israel* to submit to him. Upon which we are to observe, that *Abner* was far from being a good man; and though he pleaded in behalf of *David* the divine appointment, he declared for him rather out of resentment

ment against *Ish-bosheth*, and to insinuate himself into *David's* favour, than from a principle of duty, and in obedience to the divine appointment. Men who act upon unworthy motives conceal their passions, if they can, under the mask of religion; and conform to the commands of God only as it suits their interest. God knows their hypocrisy, and their principles of action; but lets them alone, and brings about by their means the designs of his providence. Thus the Lord made use of *Abner* to accomplish the promises he had made to *David*, that he would cause him to reign over all the people of *Israel*. However, *Abner* did not long enjoy the fruit of what he had done; *Joab* treacherously killed him, to revenge the death of his brother *Asabel*, and without doubt likewise out of jealousy and spite at seeing him so much in *David's* favour: from whence we may learn, that the spirit of jealousy, revenge, and resentment, lead men to commit very great crimes. Lastly, The curses *David* denounced against *Joab* and his posterity, shews us, that the posterity of wicked and bloody men is threatened with the curse of God; that if their crimes happen to escape the vengeance of men, yet God will not let them pass unpunished; and that he often punishes them in this life; as it happened to *Joab*, who made an unworthy end, as we read in the second chapter of the first book of *Kings*.

C H A P. IV.

TWO of *Ish-bosheth's* captains slay their master, and bring his head to *David*, who instead of rewarding them, as they expected, caused them to be put to death.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are two reflections to be made on this history. I. That though God was not the author of the sin of those two traitors who assassinated *Ish-bosheth* their king, providence permitted them to put their wicked plot in execution, to settle *David* in the peaceable possession of his kingdom. The same reflection may be made on other sins: God is not the author of them, and those who commit them will be punished for them; but his providence so over-rules and guides all things, that he makes even the sins of men serve to bring about his all wise designs. II. The behaviour of *David* is well worth our attention: it is a proof of his virtue and integrity, and of his detestation and abhorrence of treachery and cruelty, when instead of approving and rewarding those who had killed their king, *Ish-bosheth*, as they expected, he put them to death; though the death of that prince secured the kingdom to him. Kings and princes should never make use of wicked means to succeed in their designs, though never so just; and they ought to punish traitors and evil men, without having respect to their own interest: and this teaches us in general, that we ought not only to do no hurt to our enemies; but that we ought not even to rejoice at the hurt which may happen to them, without our contributing any thing to it, nor to countenance injustice and vice in any degree, how great advantage soever we may reap from it.

C H A P. V.

- I. **I**SH-BOSHETH being dead, *David* is acknowledged king by all the tribes of *Israel*.
 II. He takes *Jerusalem* from the *Jebusites*, and builds the
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the city of *David*, and has several more children. III. He receives presents from the king of *Tyre*, and gains two victories over the *Philistines*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

GOD after he had a long time exercised *David* by divers afflictions, at length made him king over all the tribes of *Israel*, gave him a glorious victory over the *Jebusites*, and over the *Philistines*, and made him to be had in great esteem by the neighbouring princes. This happy conclusion of all *David's* troubles shews us, that God is faithful to his promises; that, though he defers the completion of them, he never fails in the execution, but always delivers those whom he loves; and that, after he has made his children pass through divers trials, he at length grants them the rest and prosperity he had promised them. Let us learn from hence to resign ourselves into the hand of providence, in the mean time faithfully discharging our duty, since providence is not now less vigilant for the happiness and safety of those that fear God, than it was formerly for *David*.

C H A P. VI.

DAVID is desirous to convey the ark of the covenant to *Jerusalem*; but *Uzzab* dying because he had touched it, *David* has it placed in the house of *Obed-edom*; from whence, after three months, he caused it to be brought to *Jerusalem* with great pomp, and great tokens of joy.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

LET us attend to these four reflections, which this chapter presents us with. The first is, that when God had put *David* in the peaceable possession of his kingdom, his first care was to bring the

ark of the covenant to *Jerusalem*; on which occasion he expressed an extraordinary degree of joy, and gave proof of his great zeal in the presence of all the people. In imitation of *David* we should all have great zeal for the glory of God and his worship; but this is chiefly the duty of princes and magistrates, who have the honour and happiness to know God. II. It must be observed, That God slew *Uzzab*, because, instead of having the ark carried by the Levites, as God had expressly commanded, they had put it upon a cart, which occasioned the inconvenience it was exposed to; and because *Uzzab* had touched it, and taken it in his hands; which none but the Levites had a right to do. But however, it seems as if *Uzzab* was struck dead not barely on his own account, nor properly to punish him, since he had sinned through imprudence, and what he did might be well intended. This happened chiefly to inspire the *Israelites*, and *David* himself, with reverence for the ark, which was from that time to remain at *Jerusalem*; and to teach them not to depart in the least from the manner God had prescribed to carry the ark; and to observe with great exactness every thing appointed for his service. This effect the death of *Uzzab* produced in *David*; he was so terrified at it, that he was afraid at that time to have it brought to *Jerusalem*; and when, three months afterwards, he had it brought thither, he remedied the first fault by making it be carried by the Levites. Men of prudence and religion improve by other mens misfortunes, and by the warnings God gives them. III. God blessed the house of *Obed-edom*, where the ark was, to encourage *David* to have the ark brought to *Jerusalem*, which perhaps he would have been afraid to do so soon after the death of *Uzzab*. This leads us likewise to consider the divine presence and favour as the source of all true happiness. IV. The

The last reflection relates to the judgment which *Michal* passed upon *David*, when that prince danced for joy before the ark: she thought he was acting in a manner unbecoming and unworthy of himself, and despised him. Thus worldly-minded men judge of goodness, and of those who make profession of it: what is highly commendable and agreeable in the sight of God, they esteem weakness and meanness of spirit. But the zeal which *David* expressed on this occasion, and his prudent reply to *Michal*, should teach all Christians, and especially persons of rank and distinction, not to be ashamed of piety and religion. The sneers and wrong judgments of the ungodly and profane should be despised and disregarded when the honour of God is in question: it should be our greatest glory to discharge these duties in the most perfect and most solemn manner. The ninety sixth, the hundred and fifth, and the hundred and sixth Psalms, refer to what passed on this removing the ark, as we see in the sixteenth chapter of the first book of *Chronicles*.

C H A P. VII.

DAVID having formed a design of building a temple, the prophet *Nathan* acquaints him, that God did not think fit he should put his design in execution; but informs him, that God would give him a son who should perform it: for which *David* returns thanks to the Lord with great zeal, prays him to accomplish that promise, and to bless his family and posterity.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE pious intention of *David* to build a temple, as soon as he was in the peaceable possession of his kingdom, teaches us, that we should shew more zeal for the glory of God than for our

private interest, and that the best use we can make of the goods and advantages which God bestows upon us, is to employ them for his service and his glory. II. It is to be observed, that though the resolution which *David* had taken was a pious resolution and acceptable to God, the prophet *Nathan* informed him, that he should not build a temple, but his son, whose peaceable and glorious kingdom would be better suited to this great undertaking, If God does not always think fit that designs, good and laudable in themselves, should be executed just at the time and in the manner we have conceived, he is nevertheless pleased with them, and rewards the piety and good intentions of those that formed them. III. *Nathan's* promise to *David*, that God would give him a son, whose throne should be established for ever, related in the first place to *Solomon*; but the words principally refer to *Jesus Christ*, whose kingdom is everlasting; which is the reason the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews* applies these words to *Christ*: *I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.* IV. *David*, after he had received this promise from the prophet, returned most hearty thanks to God, offering up a most excellent prayer; which expresses his faith and firm dependence upon the promises of God, his great zeal for his glory, his joy and gratitude, and above all, his profound humility. In this prayer he likewise implores, with great fervency of devotion, the divine blessing upon himself and family. This example should incite us to celebrate the goodness of the Lord towards us, with hearts sincerely affected with his mercy, and a sense of our own unworthiness, and continually implore the divine favour and benediction with all the devotion we are able.

C H A P. VIII.

I. **D**AVID gains several victories over the *Philistines*, *Moabites*, *Edomites*, and *Syrians*. II. The king of *Hamath* sends *David* presents, which he dedicates to God, with the gold and silver he had taken from the several nations he had conquered. III. At the end of this chapter we read the names of those that were in the chief employments in the time of *David*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE see in this chapter, that God continued his favours and blessings to king *David*; his glory was continually increasing, and, as the sacred history tells us, *God was with David, and prospered him whithersoever he went*. The king, on his part, acknowledged his obligation to God, for all the victories and advantages he had gained by his assistance; and consecrated to him the spoils of the conquered nations. So long as *David* was zealous for the honour of God, and continued in the faithful discharge of his duty, God defended and protected him against his enemies, and blessed him with glory and happiness: but the scene changed when he provoked the Lord by his sins, as by the sequel of this history we learn he did. Let us acknowledge the love and protection of the almighty to be our happiness and security; and that the way to secure his protection, is to continue faithful to him: let us too learn, in imitation of *David*, who dedicated to God the spoils he had taken, to express our gratitude for all his mercies, improving, as much as possible, to his glory all the advantages we receive from him.

C H A P. IX.

DAVID remembering the promise he had made to *Saul*, and especially to *Jonathan*, to take care of their posterity, causes all the estate that belonged to *Saul* to be given to *Mephibosheth* the son of *Jonathan*, and commits the administration of it to *Ziba*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE see here the care that *David* took of *Mephibosheth*, the grandson of *Saul*, and son of *Jonathan*, his dear friend; and how he gave him all that belonged to *Saul*. This conduct of *David* shews he was a man of great equity and uprightness, as well as kind and affectionate. He would not suffer *Mephibosheth* to be deprived of what belonged to him; he preserved, in the midst of his prosperity, a tender remembrance of *Jonathan* his intimate friend, and religiously performed his promise of taking care of his family. From hence we learn, that promises ought to be religiously observed; that the duties of friendship are sacred and inviolable; that true and sincere friends remember those they have had an affection for, even after their death; and that they express their affection to them by their care of their posterity. Lastly, What *David* did for *Mephibosheth*, who was left destitute, and withal weak and infirm, shews, that those who are in prosperity ought to think upon those that are injured and afflicted; and that we should always be ready to comfort the miserable, and to do good to all.

C H A P. X.

THE king of the *Ammonites* insulting *David's* ambassadors gave occasion to a war, in which *David* twice defeated the *Ammonites* and the *Syrians*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are to observe upon what has been read,
 I. That king *David* sent ambassadors to the king of the *Ammonites* in a friendly way ; but that this prince, listening to the evil counsels of his courtiers, thought these ambassadors were spies, and accordingly treated them with the utmost indignity. Here we may consider, that what men of sincerity do with a view to promote peace and friendship, is often taken ill and misinterpreted; that men void of virtue judge of other mens sentiments by their own, and ascribe to them views which they themselves should have; that diffidence and false policy often make men take wrong measures; and that princes, and in general all those who give ear to and follow evil counsels, expose themselves to great misfortunes. As to *David's* war against the *Ammonites*, it was very just; since their king had violated the law of nations, insulting the ambassadors sent by *David* to him to testify his friendship; and also because the *Ammonites* first declared war against *David*. The event of this war, in which *David* defeated the *Ammonites*, with the *Syrians* who had joined them, shews that God favours persons of integrity and an honest intention, and in particular that he assists those princes that love peace and justice; and, on the contrary, that proud and unjust men bring the greatest misfortunes upon themselves by their insolence and haughtiness.

C H A P. XI.

HERE we have the history of the crime which *David* committed with *Bathsheba*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE have now read the history of *David's* great sin in committing adultery, and then causing *Uriah's* death. The several circumstances of *David's* fall, engage us to make the following reflections. I. That men easily forget God when they are in ease and prosperity, as *David* then was, and are exposed to great temptations. II. That looks betray the heart, and kindle criminal desires; and therefore, that men ought to turn away their eyes from every thing that may raise loose desires in the breast, as *Jesus Christ* exhorts us in the gospel. III. That it is our duty to stifle evil thoughts when they first arise in the breast; and that when they are not resisted they take possession of the heart and hurry men into sin. IV. That uncleanness, which is a great sin in itself, becomes more so by the consequences which usually attend it, and the new sins which are committed to conceal it. *David*, instead of atoning for his fault by confession and repentance, thinks only how to conceal it; for this purpose he tries very unworthy means; and at last, seeing these schemes did not succeed, he premeditatedly resolves to have his faithful servant *Uriah* dispatched in a base and treacherous manner. When men are once engaged in sin, and have made certain advances in it, they never fail to go farther, till they have carried their guilt to its highest pitch. V. We must not look upon what *David* did at this time, as one of those sins which good men fall into through weakness and infirmity, and which are not inconsistent with a state of piety: it was a sin of the most heinous nature, and the more

more so, as it was committed by a person well acquainted with his duty, greatly enlightened, and enriched with divine graces. We must not therefore imagine that *David*, in his fall, was in a state of grace and salvation. If he had not recovered by a sincere and public repentance, proportioned to the greatness of his sins, he would have perished. So that we should not make an ill use of this example; but on the contrary watch over ourselves with greater care, and conceive an utter aversion to uncleanness; especially, because sins of this nature are much more enormous in Christians than they were in *David*; and that it is more hard for them to repent as they ought, and to obtain pardon for them.

C H A P. XII.

I. **G**OD sends the prophet *Nathan* to *David* to reprove him for his crime. II. *David*, confesses his sin; and the child he had by *Bathsheba* dies, and *Solomon* is born some time after. III. *Joab* besieges the city of *Rabbah*, and takes it.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we have several important instructions. I. That God, in great goodness to *David*, sent *Nathan* to him to rouse his conscience, and to threaten him with his severe judgments. It is necessary God should make use of some means to bring sinners to repentance; which in his great goodness he does many ways, and particularly by the ministry of his servants. II. The behaviour of *Nathan*, who first proposed a parable, and then openly reproved *David* for his sin, and threatened him with the judgment of God, teaches us, that the ministers of the Lord should speak to sinners with prudence, in the most likely way to bring them to themselves,

selves, and at the same time with courage, and without flattering them, or having respect of persons. III. The confession that *David* made of his fault, not only before *Nathan*, but even in the most public manner, as appears from the fifty first Psalm, shews what is the character of true repentance. A true penitent, sincerely concerned for his sins, is not ashamed to confess them; and that too in a public manner, if a public confession be necessary to remedy the evil he has done, and the scandal he has given. IV. The pardon which *Nathan* assured *David* of, teaches us, that mercy and forgiveness are the consequences of sincere and humble confession, when attended with amendment and reformation. V. It is, however, to be remarked, that God did not revoke the temporal judgments which he had denounced against *David*; and to convince him that those threatnings would be executed, *Bathsheba's* child died. Though God forgives truly penitent sinners, and frees them from eternal torments, he does not always exempt them from the punishments of this life; there are some sins in particular which he usually punishes in this world, to keep up and improve in sinners a sense of their sins, and make them an example to others. All the denunciations of the prophet were fulfilled, as we learn in the sequel of this history. VI. *David's* grief during the sickness of the child, and his resignation after its death, teach us, that it is very lawful to pray to God to remove affliction from us; but that when God makes us sensible he will not hear us, we must resign ourselves to his will; and especially when we have brought the chastisement upon us by our sins. We may likewise learn from this history, that we ought not to grieve excessively for the death of persons that are dear to us, and particularly for the death of children. Lastly, The birth of *Salomon*, and the ad-

van-

vantages gained by *David* over the *Ammonites*, shew that God was reconciled by his repentance.

C H A P. XIII.

AMNON, the son of king *David*, having ravished his sister *Tamar*; she retired to *Absalom* her brother, who, at the end of two years, caused *Amnon* to be killed at a feast; after which he fled to the king of *Geshur*, his mother's father.

R-E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT is related in this and the following chapters deserves to be well considered. In this we see, that though God had pardoned king *David*, he thought fit, however, to chastise him many ways, to prevent him from losing a sense of his fault, and to repair the great scandal he had given to his subjects. As he had offended God by adultery and murder, he was punished by the incest of *Amnon*, and afterwards by his death; and his own children, *Amnon*, *Tamar*, and *Absalom*, were scourges in the hands of God for his chastisement. Great afflictions are absolutely necessary for great sinners; and generally men are punished by sins of the same nature with those they had committed: Guilty parents most commonly meet with a punishment in their own families; and particularly, those who fall into the sins of uncleanness, have often children that are like them in that respect. To this general reflection let us add these three particular ones: I. We see in *Amnon's* incest and its consequences, that the unruly lusts of the flesh often draw men into the most enormous crimes, and expose them to the greatest miseries, and that divine vengeance pursues those who give themselves up to sensuality and uncleanness. II. It is worth taking notice, that *Amnon's* incest, and

and all the miserable consequences of it, were owing to the pernicious counsel of *Jonadab* his cousin and friend. This teaches us, that the counsels of false friends and flatterers, and of those who humour our passions, are fatal to those that follow them. III. The third reflection is, that though *Absalom* was guilty of a very heinous sin in killing his brother *Amnon*; yet God permitted it for the punishment of *Amnon*, and at the same time for the correction of *David*. Thus divers crimes are committed which God abhors and will severely punish; and which he does not prevent, because he makes use of the passions and wickedness of men to do justice, and to punish the guilty.

C H A P. XIV.

JOAB having asked *David*, by means of the widow of *Tekoa*, to call back *Absalom*, who since the murder of his brother *Amnon* had withdrawn himself; *David* gave him leave to return to *Jerusalem*, upon condition he should not come into his presence; but at the end of two years, *Absalom* obliged *Joab* to ask *David*'s leave for him to appear at court; which he obtained.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we are chiefly to consider the kindness of *David*, and his tenderness towards his son *Absalom*; his kindness appeared in his being willing to pardon *Absalom* the crime he had committed in killing his brother *Amnon*, and allowing him to return to *Jerusalem*. Though the event proved, that *David* had been deceived in imagining *Absalom* was returned to his duty, yet what he did was praise-worthy; and we ought, like him, readily to pardon those that have offended us, especially when they appear

appear concerned for their faults. On the other hand, this proceeding of *David* shews the evil disposition of *Absalom*; since, instead of being moved by the pardon his father had granted him, he made use of the leave he had to be at *Jerusalem* to form a conspiracy against him. No good is to be expected from men of a corrupt heart; they grow better neither by adversity nor prosperity; and so far are they from mending, that they take occasion from the deliverances God vouchsafes them to grow more wicked and put their evil designs in execution. Lastly, We must here reflect upon the designs of providence, and consider that God permitted *Absalom* to be recalled to *Jerusalem*, to chastise *David* by the means of that rebellious and unnatural son, as will be seen in the following chapter.

C H A P. XV.

- I. **A**BSALOM conspires against his father *David*, and gets himself to be proclaimed king.
- II. *David* is forced to leave *Jerusalem*, and to fly before his son.
- III. The priests, who would have followed him with the ark of the covenant, he sent back again to *Jerusalem*.
- IV. He likewise sends *Hushai* thither, to defeat by his means the counsels of *Ahithophel*, who had embraced the party of *Absalom*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

- I. **T**HE first reflection this history presents us with is, that God continued to pursue *David* with his judgments, and verified the truth of what the prophet *Nathan* had told him, that God would raise up evil against him out of his own family. *David* is driven away by his own son, and abandoned by the greatest part of his subjects, and forced to fly from *Jerusalem*; which must needs be
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a more sensible trial to him than all those he had already undergone. Besides this, we may consider here the wickedness to *Abfalom*, his ingratitude and inhumanity to *David* his father, who had forgiven him; the artifices he used to gain the affections of the people; and above all his extreme impiety, which appeared in his pretending to go to perform a vow to God at *Hebron*, whereas he went thither only to get himself declared king. Wicked men are capable of any thing; they make use of treachery, and even of the pretext of religion to execute their criminal designs. However, though *Abfalom's* enterprize was absolutely criminal and unjust, he had at first some success: this sometimes happens to the wicked and ungodly; but for all this, they do not escape the justice of God. III. We ought very particularly to take notice of the words pronounced by *David*, when he sent back the priests with the ark to *Jerusalem*: *If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation; but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.* This language shews with what profound humility *David* received the chastisement of the Lord; with what resignation he submitted to the divine will, and likewise his zeal and close attachment to the place where God was worshipped. Thus ought those whom God afflicts, and especially great sinners, to humble themselves under his hand, submit to his will, and esteem themselves unworthy of his favours. *David's* prayer to God that he would confound the counsels of *Ahitophel*, shews, that the counsels of artful men, who are in great reputation for wisdom, are greatly to be feared; and it shews too, that *David* had recourse only to God in all his troubles; and that though he suffered the punishment due to his sins, he

he still trusted in him. Lastly, *David* sent *Hushai* back to *Jerusalem*, with orders to pretend to be of *Absalom's* party; and to endeavour to discover and defeat the counsels of *Ahitophel*. No doubt *David* might lawfully do this with respect to *Absalom*, not only in quality of a king, but chiefly as a father attacked by his own son; especially as he always preserved a great affection for *Absalom*, and did not design to injure him in the least, but rather proposed to hinder him from doing more mischief, and to bring him to his duty again. This action therefore of *David* by no means authorises deceit, lying and treachery. It appears from the third Psalm, that *David* in this extremity had a perfect confidence in God, and trusted in his assistance.

C H A P. XVI.

I. **W**HILE *David* was a fugitive, *Ziba* obtains of him, by slander and deceit, a grant of the estate of *Mephibosheth*, grandson of *Saul*. II. *David* being insulted by a man named *Shimei*, shews great moderation, and an entire resignation to providence. III. *Absalom* enters into *Jerusalem*, and takes *Hushai* into his service.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are here to reflect, I. On the treachery of *Ziba*, who, to get his master's estate, came to *David*, and accused him of being in a rebellion against him; and on *David's* credulity, who suffered himself to be imposed upon by this false and slanderous accusation. How dangerous a thing is it to give credit to reports, and to judge according to appearance! We should never believe rashly those who accuse others; and *David's* hasty determination shews, that men of virtue may be over-

taken by prejudice, and commit great acts of injustice, unless they are upon their guard. II. In what passed between *Shimei* and *David*, we are to observe, on one hand, the crime of *Shimei*, who cursed his king, and treated him with so great indignity; and on the other, the patience and meekness of *David*, who when he had it in his power justly to punish the insolence of that wretch, and was even solicited to it, would not suffer the people to take away his life, but patiently underwent all those affronts, and acknowledged it was God who had reduced him to the condition he then was in, and made use of *Shimei* to humble and to try him. This is the import of those words of *David* on this occasion; *Let him alone, let him curse; for the Lord has said unto him, Curse David.* But this does not mean that God commanded *Shimei* to curse his king, or that he inspired him to do it. *David* thus expressed his submission to the divine will, his great meekness and his profound humility; acknowledging that if *Shimei* insulted him unjustly, God justly punished him. This is a noble example, to teach us never to avenge ourselves, nor even suffer others to avenge our cause; to bear with patience the evils and injuries that men do us; considering that no evil befalls us but what God permits, and what we have well deserved. III. We see that God took care of *David* in the extreme danger he was then in; since *Hushai* his friend was received by *Absalom*, and by his means he could be informed of the designs which his unnatural son should form against him. Lastly, The sin committed by *Absalom* with his father's wives, is a fresh instance of the impiety and wickedness of this wretched creature; and at the same time, a just judgment of God upon *David* for his adultery, and the accomplishment of what the prophet *Nathan* had threatened him with, that God would take his wives
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and give them to one of his own house; and as *Absalom* committed this detestable action by the counsel of *Ahitophel*, whose view was to support the cause he was engaged in, and carry things to such a length, that a peace between *David* and *Absalom* might be utterly impossible; we learn how much evil may arise from wicked counsels; and what happened afterwards, both to *Absalom* and *Ahitophel*, proves, that sooner or later such counsels are fatal to those that give them, and to those that follow them.

C H A P. XVII.

I. **A** *Hithophel* advises *Absalom* to kill *David* only: but *Hushai* prevents that counsel from being followed, and gives notice of it to *David* by *Jonathan* and *Abimaaz*. II. *Ahitophel* finding his counsels were rejected, and concluding his own ruin was inevitable, in despair hangs himself. III. *David* goes over *Jordan*, and arrives at *Mabanaïm*, where he receives provisions from several persons.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are to observe here, that *Ahitophel* having advised *Absalom* to pursue after *David* while he was weary and weak, and offering himself to kill him, *Absalom* approved of the detestable counsel, and consented to the murder of his father. This horrid circumstance proves, that this unnatural son was capable of every thing, and that he was filling up the measure of his iniquities. But this is generally the case of those who have embarked in any wicked enterprise, and have stifled the voice of conscience. They are resolved to support the cause they are engaged in at any rate, and at length resolve upon the most horrid crimes. On the other

hand, we see the care providence took of *David*, and how God, by the means of *Hushai*, defeated this counsel of *Ahithophel*, which, if it had been followed, would certainly have ended in the destruction of *David*. The care of providence appeared likewise, in the preservation of *Jonathan* and *Abimaaz*, who, when they were sent to inform *David* of what passed at *Jerusalem*, were pursued, but not discovered. From all this it plainly appears, that God took *David* into his protection, and set bounds to the pride and wickedness of *Absalom*. This history shews likewise, that when God pleases he can turn the hearts of men, and render useless their wisest counsels, and bring to nought the best concerted schemes. The tragical end of *Ahithophel*, who hanged himself when he saw that his advice was not taken, and that *Absalom* could not support himself, is a remarkable example of the divine vengeance upon traitors, and upon those that form criminal and unjust enterprises.

C H A P. XVIII.

I. **D**AVID sends his forces to fight with the army of *Absalom*, and charges them to spare *Absalom* in the engagement. II. *Absalom's* army is defeated; and as he fled, he was caught in a tree by his hair, where *Joab* slew him; which when *David* heard, he was extremely afflicted.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

HERE we see the event and end of *Absalom's* rebellion, and the punishment that God inflicted upon that unnatural and impious son, who intended to have deprived his father both of his life and kingdom. In this history we see evident marks of the curse of God upon *Absalom*, since he perished
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in a very tragical manner, hanging in a tree by the hair of his head, and being killed in that posture by *Joab*, notwithstanding the strict charge his father *David* gave to save his life. This is a great example of the divine vengeance which overtakes the wicked, and especially ambitious men, disobedient children, and such as rebel against their lawful sovereigns. It is likewise observable in this history, that after God had permitted the rebellion of *Abfalom*, to chastise and humble *David* his father, he delivered him from that imminent danger, and restored to him the blessing of peace. It must be considered further, that the divine vengeance overtook not only *Abfalom*, but the *Israelites* also; for there fell of them twenty thousand: Thus did God punish those who had joined *Abfalom*, and rebelled against their king. Lastly, *David's* excessive grief when he heard of the death of *Abfalom*, must be ascribed, not only to his tender affection for his unnatural and rebellious son, but also to his piety. He was more concerned for his sin, and the state in which he died, than for his death. The affection of a parent is very strong; the sins, the ingratitude of children, cannot root it from their heart; and they who fear God are then most inconsolable, when their children are engaged in a course of sin, and they see them die in a state of condemnation.

C H A P. XIX.

I. **D**AVID being told that his concern for the death of *Abfalom* discouraged his subjects, shews himself to them, and is again established in his kingdom by the men of *Judab*. II. He pardons *Skimei*, who had insulted him as he fled before *Abfalom*. III. He restores to *Mephibosheth* the estate which *Ziba* had obtained from him by surprise.

IV. He sends back *Barzillai*, who had assisted him during the war with *Abjalom*, and takes his son into his service. V. The men of *Israel* complain that they were not consulted in bringing back *David* to *Jerusalem*.

R E F L E C T I O N S .

THIS chapter informs us, that God restored *David* to his kingdom, after the conspiracy of *Abjalom* had been defeated. God puts an end to his corrections, when men humble themselves and grow better by them; and when they receive them as they ought grants them a happy issue out of their afflictions. Besides this general observation, we may reflect upon four things that are here related. I. The first is, That *David*, who had so patiently suffered the reproaches of *Shimei* when he fled, pardoned his crime when he returned to *Jerusalem*; though *Abishai* advised to put him to death, and there was reason to believe he humbled himself only for fear of punishment. This clemency of *David* is a lesson to every body, and especially to great men, to forgive as much as possible even the most heinous injuries, and not to give ear to those who inspire them with revenge. II. *David* did an act of justice in restoring to *Mephibosheth* his goods, which *Ziba* had obtained by surprise and calumny. A conscientious man restores, or causes restitution to be made when he is able, to every one of what belongs to him; he remedies as much as possible the injury he has done, though he did it imprudently; concluding, that treaties or contracts made by surprise and ill methods, and which are contrary to justice, ought not to subsist. It is true *David* divided the estate between *Mephibosheth* and *Ziba*, whereas the former seems to be entitled to the whole. But it may be *David* only gave this order conditionally, till he had time

time to make more strict enquiry into the dispute, and that, when he was better informed, he restored the whole to *Mephibosheth*, or made it up to him some other way: the equity of this prince obliges us to suppose something of this sort: or perhaps the king only ordered that *Ziba*, who had the management of *Mephibosheth's* estate, should have for his salary half the revenue. III. *David's* gratitude to *Barzillai*, who had assisted him during his flight, teaches us never to be ungrateful to those who have done us any good: and the refusal of *Barzillai* to go with the king to *Jerusalem*, at his great age, shews us, that persons advanced in years, and generally all those who seek for a quiet and retired life, should sequester themselves from the hurry and noise of the world; and that a private life is attended with much more sweetness and innocence, than that which is spent in pomp and pleasures. Lastly, It is to be observed, upon *David's* being at first restored only by the men of *Judah*, and upon complaints made by the people of *Israel*, that they were not called to bring back *David* to *Jerusalem*; that there were already, even at that time, seeds of division between the men of *Israel* and the men of *Judah*; which afterwards gave occasion to the sedition raised by *Sheba*; and several years after, to the revolt of the ten tribes of *Israel* under the reign of *Reboboam*.

C H A P. XX.

I. **S**HEBA having made the tribes of *Israel* to rebel; *David* orders *Amasa* to assemble his army; but *Amasa* delaying too long, *David* sent *Abishai* against *Sheba*; and *Joab*, taking umbrage at the confidence *David* put in *Amasa*, in giving him the command of the army, kills him treacherously. II. Afterwards *Joab* besieges the town of *Abel*, where *Sheba*

was retired ; and the inhabitants of that town, by the advice of a woman, cut off *Sheba's* head, and so put an end to the war.

R E F L E C T I O N S .

THE observations we are to make upon *Sheba's* revolt are, that factious and seditious spirits are very dangerous, and may occasion a great deal of trouble in a state ; and that such people are never to be listened to nor encouraged. In *Joab's* killing *Amasa*, we must observe, on one hand, the wickedness of *Joab*, who, after he had slain *Abner* and *Abshai*, killed *Amasa*, in a base, treacherous, and detestable manner ; and on the other, we observe the just judgment of God upon *Amasa*, who had rebelled against his king, and joined *Abshalom's* party. And since it was envy and jealousy which hurried *Joab* to the murder of *Amasa* ; we learn from hence how dangerous it is to hearken to the suggestions of this passion, which often produces very fatal consequences. It is added, that the sedition of *Sheba* was put a stop to by the wise counsel of a certain woman, who advised to put him to death ; which shews, that prudent and good counsels are to be followed let them come from what part they will ; and that rebels commonly make a fatal end. Moreover, this rebellion of *Sheba* was a new chastisement of God upon *David* ; and here we are most seriously to consider, how many calamities this prince was exposed to ; and how the judgments of God pursued him, after he had defiled himself by adultery, and by the murder of *Uriah*. After he fell into these sins, he saw the death of his child ; the dishonour and misfortunes of his family ; his daughter *Tamar* ravished by her own brother *Amnon* ; *Amnon* slain by his brother *Abshalom* ; *Abshalom* rebelling against him, with almost all his subjects ; his wives violated in the sight of all *Israel* : he was
turned

turned out of *Jerusalem* by his son, and obliged to fly ; and afterwards had the affliction to see him perish, and had like at last to have lost his kingdom by the revolt of *Sheba*. By all which we are taught, that God abhors adultery and murder ; and that they who are guilty of these crimes, usually receive their punishment in the same way in which they had offended, that is, by impurity, and by the effusion of blood. Nevertheless, we must remember that God sent all these evils upon *David* to humble him, and to make him sensible of his sin ; that with the same design he chastises sinners ; and when they improve by his corrections, he pardons them, as he pardoned *David*.

C H A P. XXI.

I. **G**OD sends a famine upon the kingdom of *Israel* ; because *Saul* had put to death the *Gibeonites*, contrary to the treaty made with them formerly by *Joshua* ; which famine could not be removed till seven of *Saul's* sons were put to death. It is not easy to determine exactly what time this happened : but the twelfth verse gives us room to believe it was not very long after *Saul's* death. II. There is likewise an account in this chapter of four wars that *David* had with the *Philistines*, and of four giants that were slain.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS history ought to be well considered. God sent a famine upon *David's* kingdom, because *Saul*, out of a false zeal, had put to death several of the *Gibeonites*, contrary to the treaty made between their ancestors and *Joshua*, about four hundred years before ; and nothing less than the death of *Saul's* sons could remove this sore visitation.

ration. This shews clearly, that treaties which have been made and confirmed by an oath, even such as have been long made, and were obtained by surprize, ought to be observed; that they ought never to be broke on pretence of religion, or any other consideration whatever; that the violation of oaths and promises brings the severest judgments of God, not only upon princes and governors who are guilty of that crime, but also upon their families, and even sometimes upon their people. We may likewise observe in this history the curse of God upon the posterity of *Saul*; and from thence learn, that wicked men expose themselves and their children to all kinds of miseries. It is proper to make two observations more: I. That the sons of *Saul* were justly delivered by *David* to be put to death, since he gave them not up to the *Gibeonites* till after he had consulted the Lord, as we read in the beginning of this chapter; and as their death put an end to the famine, God signified by the event his approbation, of their being put to death. Therefore *David*, in this action, did not transgress the law, which forbids the children to be punished for their fathers sins. II. The next thing to be considered is, that if God suffered the sons of *Saul* to be put to death, it was only a temporal punishment. What we read at the end of the chapter, of several giants slain in the wars of *David* with the *Philistines*, proves, that God gave him great success, and though he had to deal with very formidable enemies, he always protected him, and by his means completed the destruction of the enemies of his people.

C H A P. XXII.

DAVID being delivered from his enemies, and in the peaceable possession of his kingdom, praises God by a song; in which he describes the great dangers

gers he had been exposed to, and celebrates the power, the goodness, and the justice of God, in delivering him from them.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

ON this song we are to consider, I. That though *David* was a favourite of heaven, and a king beloved of God, he had been exposed to dangers in which his ruin seemed inevitable. The same may happen to others whom God loves: who are nevertheless the objects of his love, and ought never to despair of his assistance. II. The exalted description *David* gives in this song of the power God had displayed in his behalf, and the facility with which he had confounded his enemies, furnishes us with powerful motives to confidence in the almighty, since nothing can hurt those whom he takes into his care and protection. III. We must take particular notice of what *David* says, that *God had rewarded him according to his righteousness; that he had kept the ways of the Lord, and had not wickedly departed from his God*; which we must not understand, as if *David* thought himself innocent before God; but his meaning is, that God had supported the righteousness of his cause and his innocence against *Saul* and all his enemies, who unjustly persecuted him; it means likewise, that he had not forsaken the worship of the true God, nor ever fallen into idolatry; otherwise, he had been guilty of great sins, but the Lord had had respect to his repentance. Men have no merit before God; yet God, who is just and holy, has respect, according to his promise, to the justice and integrity of those that serve him. This is expressed in these words: *With the upright man, thou wilt shew thyself upright; and with the pure, thou wilt shew thyself pure; but thou renderest to the wicked according to their wickedness.* God protects good men,

men, and hears their prayers in the time of their trouble; whereas he rejects the cry of the wicked; as *David* signifies, when he says, that *when they are in distress, there is none to deliver them; and when they cry to the Lord, he will not hear them.* Lastly, *David's* hearty thanks and praise to God in this song, should teach us to preserve the remembrance of the dangers we have been exposed to, and from which God has been graciously pleased to deliver us; that so we may be engaged to testify our gratitude, and praise him continually.

C H A P. XXIII.

TH E R E are two things related in this chapter, I. The last words of *David.* II. The names of the chief and most valiant officers of that prince; and some of their most remarkable actions.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WH A T we are chiefly to take notice of in this chapter are, the last words of *David*, the meaning of which is as follows: In them he gives a description of a good prince; comparing him to the sun, which by its rays warms the earth after it has been refreshed with showers, and makes it fruitful. This he declares would be the case of his family, out of which he was persuaded God would raise up, after his death, good governors to rule his people *Israel*, and would enrich them with his blessings, while his judgments would be poured out upon the wicked, compared to thorns which are cut down and burnt. We here learn, that princes should be men that fear God, just and beneficent; making it their chief study to promote the happiness of their subjects. *David's* sentiments upon this subject are still better suited to Christian kings and princes.

princes. From these words we likewise learn, that just and religious princes are a source of blessings to their people, which they cannot esteem too highly; and therefore that they ought with great earnestness to beg of God to give them such to reign over them. Lastly, We are to conclude from the last words of *David*, that the divine favour extends to those that fear him, and to their posterity; but that the wicked are the objects of his wrath. From the number of the valiant men that were in *David's* service, and the relation of their most remarkable actions, we learn, that when God is pleased to exalt a prince and protect a people, he raises up persons proper to execute great designs; and that in general, when he proposes any end to himself, he never fails to provide the means necessary to arrive at it. The action of the three valiant men who went and drew water at *Betlehem*, was a proof of their courage and love for their king. However, *David* would not drink it, because they had got it at the hazard of their lives. By this refusal he shewed that he did not approve of their exposing themselves without necessity: but he made a religious use of the water, pouring it out in honour of the deity; which was a greater glory to those who fetched it, than if he had drank it. This is an instance of *David's* prudence, and of the account he made of the valour of these three men; it teaches us likewise, that we ought not, for our private interest or satisfaction, to expose others to danger, nor even suffer them to expose themselves without necessity.

C H A P. XXIV.

I. **D**AVID having sinned in numbering the people, God sent the prophet *Gad* to him, to give him his choice of three punishments, the
famine,

famine, sword, or pestilence. II. The king choosing the latter, seventy thousand of his subjects perished. III. The divine wrath was averted by *David's* profound humiliation, and by the sacrifice he offered, by God's command, in the place appointed by the prophet.

R E F L E C T I O N S .

DAVID's sin, punishment, repentance, and pardon, are the four things which we are to consider in this chapter. I. He sinned in making the people be numbered, because he did it without necessity, contrary to the command of God, and from a principle of pride; and his guilt was the greater, as he had been by *Joab* and by his other officers warned of the sin and danger of what he was going to do. Besides, *David* after his former sins and the punishments he had endured, ought to have been more humble. We here see, that it is a hard task to preserve our humility in a prosperous and exalted station; and that we may sin, not only by doing things in themselves sinful, but even in things in themselves innocent, when they are done in a manner that God approves not of, or upon a bad principle. II. On the punishment which God inflicted upon *David* we must observe, that by destroying so great a number of his subjects, and in so short a time, God punished him for glorying in their multitude; and that by ordering him to choose one of the three scourges proposed by the prophet, he was pleased to try him, and see whether he would intirely resign himself into the hands of the Lord, or trust in human means; but above all, to make him, by this means, the more sensible that he had provoked the Lord to anger. However, he gave him at the same time a proof of his goodness; and *David* expressed his humility, his confidence in God, and his resignation to the divine will, by choosing the pestilence, which
proceeds

proceeds in a more particular manner from God, and which might have fallen upon himself as well as his subjects; whereas he might have secured himself from the dangers of war and famine. Thus does God employ the fittest means to bring men to repentance, and gives proofs of his love, while his hand is stretched out to chastise them: and thus ought we, when God afflicts us, to resign ourselves intirely to his will, and submit to all his dispensations. III. *David's hearty sorrow for his sin, shews, that if he had forgot himself so as to give way to proud and arrogant thoughts, he humbled himself in a very instructive manner, falling down, and saying before all the people: Lo, I have sinned and done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me and against my father's house.* These words denote *David's* profound humility, his lively sense of the heinousness of his sin, and his tender affection for his subjects; and shew, that those who are sincerely sorry for their faults, are not ashamed to confess them publicly; especially when by their faults they have exposed others to misery. We have likewise herein an excellent and extraordinary example of the affectionate regard which kings ought to have for their subjects. Lastly, The pardon granted to *David*, in consequence of his repentance and sacrifice, shews, that the Lord's anger is turned away, and he shews mercy to sinners, when they are sincerely humbled and have recourse to his bounty and mercy.

The end of the second book of SAMUEL.

T H E
F I R S T B O O K
O F
K I N G S.

A R G U M E N T.

The first book of Kings contains the history of the reign of Solomon, the son of David, and of the kings of Judah and Israel, to the end of the reign of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and Ahab the king of the ten tribes; which includes the history of one hundred and seventeen years.

C H A P. I.

I. **D**AVID being old, marries *Abishag*. II. *Adonijah* his son sets up for king, but *David* being informed of it by *Be'sheba*, and by the prophet *Nathan*, causes *Solomon* to be anointed, and to be proclaimed king, so that *Adonijah's* faction was presently dispersed. III. *Solomon* pardons *Adonijah*, upon condition that he would continue in his duty for the time to come.

R E F L E C T I O N S *after reading the chapter.*

THIS attempt of *Adonijah*, was another trial for *David*. However, providence suffered this
this

this to happen whilst *David* was yet alive, that *Adonijah*'s party might be ruined and dispersed, and *Solomon* established in the kingdom; that so the promises made in favour of *Solomon* might be accomplished; and that the pride, and ambition, and conspiracy of *Adonijah*, might only hasten the exaltation of *Solomon*, and strengthen him in the kingdom. This is one of those examples which prove that God bringeth down the high looks of the proud, and generally confounds them in their own haughtiness; and that nothing can hinder the execution of the designs of providence; that whatever men do to prevent them, only serves to hasten them; and that criminal attempts turn to the confusion of the authors. *Solomon*'s clemency in pardoning *Adonijah*, must be ascribed to his kindness, and to the love *David* had for *Adonijah*, notwithstanding his sin. This should teach great men to behave with clemency, and to pardon offences committed against them, as much as possible, and as the public peace will admit of it; and we ought in general to be inclined to meekness, and to forgive with pleasure those that have offended us.

C H A P. II.

I. **K**ING *David* being near his end, exhorts *Solomon* to fear God; orders him to put *Joab* to death for the murders and other crimes he had been guilty of; to take care of *Barzillai*'s family, who had assisted him when *Absalom* conspired against him; and to punish *Shimei*. II. *David* dies, and after his death *Solomon* reigned in his stead, and put to death his brother *Adonijah*: he banished *Abiathar* the priest; and likewise put to death *Joab* and *Shimei*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE exhortations of *David* to his son *Solomon* before he died, to fear God, are a mark of his piety, and of his affection for his son. In imitation of this example, parents ought, above all things, to recommend to their children the fear of the Lord, while they are with them, and before they leave this world; which is the true way to secure the blessing of God to their families. The orders *David* gave *Solomon* concerning *Joab* and *Shimei*, it must be observed, do not argue *David* to be bloody-minded and revengeful: he gave him these orders, because it was his duty to instruct his son, and provide for the security of his kingdom. But he recommended to him the family of *Barzillai* from a principle of gratitude, which we ought always to cherish in our breast for those who have done us good, and for their posterity. *Solomon* began his reign with the punishment of *Adonijah*, *Joab*, *Abiathar* and *Shimei*. His brother *Adonijah*, whom he had pardoned before, he justly put to death, because he persisted in his design of being made king; he had a party for him, *Abiathar* the high priest, and *Joab* the general of the army, being in his interest; and his aim was to strengthen his party by marrying *Abisbag*, who had been the wife of his father *David*; which besides was in itself a criminal attempt. *Solomon* did not put *Abiathar* the priest to death, but only banished him, in respect to his character, and because he had been a friend to his father *David*. This was in *Solomon* an act of justice and prudence; but in the views of providence it was designed to accomplish those threatnings that God had formerly denounced against the family of *Eli*, from which *Abiathar* descended. As to *Joab*; whose life *Solomon* took away, he deserved to die for his wickedness in killing *Abner*, *Abjalom*, and *Amasa*, and for

for rebelling against *David*, as he had then done, by entering into the conspiracy of *Adonijah*. As for *Shimei*, *Solomon* at first gave him his life, on condition he would not depart from *Jerusalem*; prudence requiring him to use this precaution with a man he had so much reason to suspect; but when *Shimei* broke the oath which he had taken, and left *Jerusalem*, perhaps with some ill design, he was justly condemned to die. Princes are sometimes obliged, contrary to their own inclination, to use severity, and take away the lives of such as disturb the public tranquillity; and bloody, unjust, and seditious men, such as *Adonijah*, *Abiathar*, *Joab*, and *Shimei*, receive at length the reward of their deeds.

C H A P. III.

I. **K**ING *Solomon* marries the daughter of *Pharaoh* king of *Egypt*. II. He goes to *Gibeon*, where the tabernacle was, to offer a solemn sacrifice; God appears to him in that place, and permits him to ask of him what he pleased. *Solomon* having desired wisdom, rather than riches, God grants him both, and that prince soon gave proofs of the extraordinary wisdom he had received from heaven, in the judgment he pronounced in the dispute between the two women about their children.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

GOD granted *Solomon* a peculiar favour, when he gave him the liberty to ask what he pleased; and *Solomon* gave an instance of his wisdom and piety, when he asked of God skill and understanding to enable him to govern the people, rather than glory and riches. This request was so agreeable to God, that he granted this prince an extraordinary degree of wisdom, and at the same time gave him riches and

glory surpassing the greatest kings. This teaches princes and magistrates, that being set up for the good of the people, they ought above all things to endeavour to get that wisdom and integrity which they have so much need of, and to found their glory, not in power and riches, but in the exercise of justice, and in good government. And we ought all of us to learn from hence, to labour after, and beg of God in the first place true wisdom, which consists in fearing him; and the gifts and graces of the spirit necessary to that end. The manner in which God received *Solomon's* prayer, proves, that he is always ready to grant these gifts to those that ask them, besides which, he often grants them temporal blessings, although they do not ask them. This is what *Jesus Christ* teaches us in these words: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.* Lastly, They soon discovered that *Solomon* was endued with an extraordinary degree of wisdom, by the judgment he passed between the two women that came before him; and these beginnings of his reign shew how completely happy that prince would have been, if he had persevered in holiness, and in the fear of the Lord.

C H A P. IV.

IN this chapter we see, I. Who were the principal officers of king *Solomon*. II. The extent of his kingdom; his riches; the plenty and peace enjoyed by his subjects; his wisdom; his knowledge of natural things; and the great reputation he had in foreign countries.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE see here, that God raised *Solomon* to a very great pitch of glory, granting him riches and power,

power, which distinguished him from the greatest princes, and withal, such wisdom, and prudence, and knowledge, which made him vastly superior to the wisest men that were then in the world. Thus God fulfilled the promises he had made to *David*, to give him a son whose kingdom should be very glorious; and thus he rewarded the piety of *Solomon*, and the zeal he then shewed for his service. We may moreover consider, that God granted this power and plenty to *Solomon*, to enable him to build the temple of *Jerusalem*; and to establish divine service in it. However, it must be remembered, that this great wisdom, and the riches and the graces *Solomon* had received, were profitable to him only whilst he used them as he ought; but as soon as he abused them, they became a snare and ruin to him. This shews, how dangerous the possession of riches is, and how much we ought to fear abusing God's gifts and graces.

C H A P. V.

HIRAM king of *Tyre* and *Solomon* send ambassadors to each other. *Solomon* employs a great number of workmen to build the temple, and obtains of *Hiram* workmen and materials for the same purpose.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IT appears here, that as soon as *Solomon* was upon the throne, he set about building the temple, according to the direction and scheme that his father *David* had communicated to him before his death; and that God, to facilitate the execution of this pious design, disposed the king of *Tyre* to grant him all he desired. Nothing is more commendable in a prince, who knows God, than to have at heart the concerns

of religion, and God blesses those designs which are formed to promote his glory, and gives them success.

C H A P. VI.*

SOLOMON begins to build the temple in the fourth year of his reign, and the building was finished at the end of seven years.

C H A P. VII.

SOLOMON builds the house in the forest of *Libanus*; his own and the queen's palace; and orders several things to be made for the temple, and for divine service.

REFLECTIONS on chap. vi, and vii.

AS soon as *Solomon* was settled upon the throne, he began to build the temple at *Jerusalem*, agreeable to his father *David's* order, and the will of God himself. He built it in a most magnificent manner, employing to that end those immense riches God had given him; and spared nothing which might engage his subjects, and all the neighbouring nations, to reverence and respect the temple. These were marks of the zeal which then animated and inspired him. God let him know that what he had done was acceptable in his sight; and that if he and his people inviolably adhered to him, he would always be their protector and their God. But this prince and his subjects falling into disobedience and idolatry, that holy place was delivered to the mercy of idolatrous nations, and was at last utterly destroyed. Lastly, The temple of *Solomon*, as to the chief parts of it, the court, the holy and the most holy place, and what was set in them, was the same with the tabernacle, which *Moses* had built in the wilderness, as we see by the fortieth chapter of *Exodus*.

C H A P.

C H A P. VIII.

I. **T**HE ark of the covenant, and the sacred vessels, which had been till then in the tabernacle, which *David* had set up at *Jerusalem*, king *Solomon* orders to be carried into the temple. He offers sacrifices, and God gives them tokens of his presence.

II. He dedicates the temple by a prayer, in which he blesses God that he had happily executed his design of building him an house, and beseeches him to accept the prayers which should be offered up to him in that place. III. Lastly, After his prayer is ended, he offers a solemn sacrifice, and again praises God; and then dismisses the people.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

SOLOMON's dedication of the temple, and the prayer he addressed to God, is a noble proof of that prince's fervent zeal at that time. In this prayer we see, his sentiments of religion were perfectly pure; that he considered the temple as a place where God would be present, but not confined; and which would be set apart chiefly for prayer, and not for a worship purely external and bodily. This teaches us, that God dwells not in temples made with hands; that he fills heaven and earth; and therefore, that he ought to be every where worshipped in spirit and in truth. Nevertheless, when there are places set apart for his service, they ought to be had in reverence; and we should consider them chiefly as houses of prayer, as the temple at *Jerusalem* was, as our Lord teaches us in the gospel. Let us next consider the several parts of this prayer of *Solomon*. He begged of God to hear all the supplications offered up to him in the temple by the *Jews*, in their several necessities, and even by strangers. From this prayer we learn, that all

events proceed from God ; that war, famine, pestilence, and other judgments, are inflicted by providence, when men provoke God by their sins ; that to have recourse to God by prayer, confession of sins, and true repentance, is the way to remedy these evils ; and that God is always ready to hear and to deliver those who call upon him in their necessities, and with all their heart turn unto him. We here see, lastly, with what fervency and joy *Solomon* gave thanks to God, and implored his blessing in behalf of all the people. Let us join with him in both these duties ; praising God for all his blessings, and especially for spiritual mercies ; above all, with fervent devotion beseeching him to turn our hearts towards him, that we may keep his commandments faithfully and with perseverance.

C H A P. IX.

I. **G**OD again appears to *Solomon*, and promises to dwell in the temple, and to establish his kingdom, if he and his people obeyed his laws ; threatening, on the contrary, to destroy the *Israelites* and the temple, if they forsook his service. II. *Solomon* gives to the king of *Tyre* several cities, in return for gold and materials which that prince had furnished him with ; he builds cities and forts, and makes several nations tributary ; gives posts and offices to the *Israelites* his subjects ; brings the queen his consort to the palace he had built for her ; and offers sacrifices to God, and sends a fleet to *Ophir*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HIS second vision, in which God renewed with *Solomon* his promises of favour, provided he and his people were obedient, and threatened him with the effects of his wrath if they forsook him,

him, shews, that God neglects nothing which may tend to unite men to him, and confirm them in goodness. He is always ready to pour his benefits upon them, while they fear him; but deprives them of his blessings, when they dare to offend him, and withdraw their allegiance from him. Thus it was with the *Jews*, who, when they had provoked the Lord by their sins, experienced the truth of the threatenings contained in this chapter. II. *Solomon* took care to provide for the security of his kingdom, and the happiness of his subjects, which is not only lawful, but the indispensable duty of a good prince. He expressed likewise a great zeal for religion and the worship of God; which is still more worthy of a prince's care, whom God has honoured with the knowledge of himself. Lastly, We see in this chapter, that God blessed *Solomon* in all his undertakings, confirmed and enlarged his dominion, subduing to him the neighbouring nations, and increasing his riches and revenues. Behold how God prospered this prince while he adhered to his duty! and thus is he always ready and willing to bless good kings, and in general all those that fear him and serve him in truth and sincerity.

C H A P. X.

THIS chapter contains two things, I. The arrival of the queen of *Sheba*, who came to *Jerusalem* to see and hear king *Solomon*. II. A description of the riches of *Solomon*; of his throne; of his vessels; of his chariots; of the tribute that was paid him; and of the plenty enjoyed by his subjects.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THERE are two things chiefly to be considered on the journey taken by the queen of *Sheba*,
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who came to *Jerusalem*, because she had heard of the wisdom and splendor of *Solomon*: One is, that this journey served not only to heighten the glory and reputation of that prince; but also to inspire the queen of *Sheba* and her attendants with great reverence for the true God, who was worshipped at *Jerusalem*. It appears, by what that princess said to king *Solomon*, that she returned to her own country full of such thoughts, since she acknowledged God had given *Solomon* all his wisdom and all his glory, and made him king over *Israel*. The other reflection is that which our Lord makes in the gospel, when he says that the queen of *Sheba*, who came from a far country to hear the wisdom of *Solomon*, shall rise up in judgment against us and condemn us, if we do not grow better by the divine instructions of him that is greater than *Solomon*; and who in wisdom, as well as glory, infinitely surpasses this king of the *Jews*. As for the magnificence and riches of that great king, which are described in this chapter, it must be considered, I. That God granted him those advantages, to accomplish the promises he made of giving him such wisdom, riches and glory, as should raise him above all other kings. II. We should take notice of the judgment which *Solomon* himself passes upon his glory, in the book of *Ecclesiastes*: *I was*, says he, *king over Israel in Jerusalem; I was great above all that had been before me; I made me great works; I built me houses; I gathered me also silver, and gold, and precious things; and whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; and withheld not my heart from any joy. But when I had looked upon all the labour which I had taken, I found that all was vanity and vexation of spirit.* Add to this, that the enjoyment of all these advantages is not only vain, but dangerous. Men are easily corrupted in the midst of peace and plenty, as *Solomon* himself was at last,

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as we find in the next chapter. We ought therefore in this respect to set bounds to our desires, and depend upon providence for the rest, which will always provide us with the necessaries of life, as it clothes the flowers of the field more magnificently than *Solomon* was in all his glory, as *Jesus Christ* tells us in the gospel.

C H A P. XI.

I. **K**ING *Solomon* forsakes God in his old age, and is drawn away into idolatry by his wives, and occasions the people to fall into the same sin. II. At which God being provoked, declared that he would take away from his son a part of his kingdom, and even at that time did stir up against him *Hadad*, *Rezon*, and *Jeroboam*. III. To the last of these a prophet foretold, that he should reign over ten tribes of *Israel*; upon which *Jeroboam* retired into *Egypt*, where he stayed till the death of *Solomon*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE reflections to be here made relate to *Solomon's* sin, and to his punishment. I. In his sin we are to consider, that this prince, who had been enriched with so many graces; who had been so wise in his youth, and who had dedicated the temple of *Jerusalem* with so great zeal and devotion, forsook God in his old age, and fell into idolatry; he built temples to the idols which his wives adored; in these temples he worshipped false gods himself, and drew his subjects into the same sin. If the wisest of men so greatly erred, who dare be off their guard? Even those who have received the greatest favours from God, ought to improve by this example, and confess, that notwithstanding all these advantages, they may fall into the greatest disorders, and become wholly corrupt:

rupt: Those especially, who in their youth have had, through the grace of God, sentiments of piety and virtue, ought to preserve them with great care, lest they lose them, and God intirely forsake them. It must likewise be observed, that *Solomon* corrupted himself amidst the pleasures and the glory that surrounded him. But the chief cause of his corruption, was his marrying several wives, and they too strangers and idolators; which God had expressly forbidden the kings of *Israel* to do. These women seduced him, and tempted him to idolatry. This is an example, which proves that men are easily seduced by plenty and pleasures; that voluptuousness is the most dangerous of all temptations; and that women, lost to all sense of virtue and true religion, may engage those who are devoted to them in all manner of irregularity and impiety. II. We see, in the second place, that the Lord, provoked at *Solomon's* thus forsaking him, and drawing his people into idolatry, in his own time stirred up several enemies against him, and took from his son a great part of his kingdom, to give it to *Jeroboam*. Punishment follows close upon the sins we commit against God; but he is above all offended with those who ungratefully turn away from him. He deprives them of his grace and favour, takes from them the advantages they did enjoy, and makes them examples of his vengeance. But *Solomon* not only introduced idolatry, he even suffered it to continue all his life, so that it remained in the reign of his son *Rehoboam*, as we find in the sequel of this history. *Solomon* therefore did not retrieve his great sin. We likewise learn from this history, and from what the prophet *Abijah* said to *Jeroboam*, that it is God who exalteth and abaseth kings, and disposes of kingdoms, and giveth them to whom he pleases.

C H A P. XII.

HERE we see three things: I. How, and upon what occasion, ten tribes of *Israel* revolted from *Rehoboam* the son of *Solomon*, and took *Jeroboam* for their king. II. That *Rehoboam*, intending to make war against the ten revolted tribes, was forbidden by God to execute that design. III. That *Jeroboam*, fearing lest his subjects should return to their obedience to *Rehoboam*, when they went up to *Jerusalem* to the solemn festivals, set up a false worship in his kingdom, making golden calves, which he placed in *Dan* and *Bethel*, and caused to be worshipped under the name of the God of *Israel*.

R E F L E C T I O N S .

IN this chapter we have an account of a remarkable event; the division of the kingdom of *Rehoboam*, the son of *Solomon*, into two kingdoms; one of which was that of *Judah*, which remained subject to *Rehoboam*; and the other that of the ten tribes that revolted, of which *Jeroboam* was king. Thus God punished the posterity of *Solomon* as the prophet *Abijah* had declared, after he had forsaken the worship of God to serve idols. And as *Rehoboam* lost part of his kingdom because he would follow the rash violent counsels of the young people, rather than the prudent advice of the old men; one may learn, that princes should never use their people with too great rigour, and that it is dangerous to listen to the violent counsels of persons that have neither prudence nor experience, which is commonly the case of young folks, though they flatter our passions. God's forbidding *Rehoboam*, and his subjects, by the prophet *Shemaiah*, to make war against their brethren of the ten tribes, shews, that God was pleased the kingdom

kingdom of *Israel* should remain separated from *Judab*. Besides, God suffered them not at that time to make war upon *Jeroboam*, because that prince had not yet offended him by idolatry, and because his subjects and the men of *Judab* were brethren. This shews, that we ought not hastily to take up arms against those with whom we are united, especially by the bands of religion. Lastly, As *Rehoboam* and his subjects desisted from their enterprise, as soon as the prophet had made known to them what the will of the Lord was; we ought likewise to submit to whatever God commands, and never resist his providence, when we see he is determined to correct us. Here however, we must take notice of the blindness and ingratitude of *Jeroboam*, who, instead of relying on the promises God had made him of preserving the kingdom in his family, if he continued faithful, and fearing lest his subjects should forsake him, if they went to sacrifice at *Jerusalem*, out of a false policy set up idolatrous worship in his kingdom, which occasioned the ruin of his family; and at last, the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes. Thus men, instead of trusting to God in the faithful discharge of their duty, for security have recourse to ill methods, whereby they draw upon themselves at length those very misfortunes they mean to avoid. It is also worth notice, that though *Jeroboam* and his subjects did not intend perhaps to worship false gods, nor did look upon these two golden calves as real deities; but meant only to worship the true God under the similitude of these calves; yet the scripture assures us, they were guilty of real idolatry: from whence it follows, that to make a man an idolator, it is not necessary that he intend to worship false gods; but that a man then becomes guilty of this sin, when he worships God under any similitude whatever, and transgresses what is in
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so express a manner prescribed in the law of God on this subject.

C H A P. XIII.

I. **A** Prophet comes from *Judab* to *Bethel*, and foretels that the altar that *Jeroboam* had built there, should be destroyed by a king named *Josiab*; which prediction he confirms by two miracles. II. This same prophet is killed by a lion, for eating in the house of another prophet, contrary to the command of God.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IT is something remarkable, that as soon as *Jeroboam* had set up his false worship, and while he was offering upon the altar at *Bethel*, a prophet came thither from *Judab*, who foretold that that altar should be destroyed by a king of the race of *David*, named *Josiab*. This prediction was immediately confirmed by two miracles; the altar was rent, and the hand of the king, which he stretched out to lay hold of the prophet, withered and became immoveable, but was restored to him afterwards upon the prayer of the prophet. These things happened to convince the ten tribes, that the worship which *Jeroboam* had established at *Bethel* was odious in the sight of God; and that, although he had permitted them to revolt from *Reboboam*, *David's* grandson, yet the posterity of *David* should continue for ever. The prediction of the prophet that came from *Judab* is very express: the king, who was to destroy the altar of *Bethel* is particularly named in it; and the prophecy was accomplished about three hundred years after, when the good king *Josiab* overthrew the altar of *Bethel*, as we read in the twenty third chapter of the second book of *Kings*. God's prohibiting the prophet, who went to *Bethel*, to eat in that place, shewed, that God looked upon

upon that place as defiled by the idolatry practised in it, and the death of the same prophet, who was killed by a lion, for eating with the prophet of *Bethel*, tended to the same purpose; and that it might more plainly appear God had sent the lion, he suffered not the wild beast, after he had slain the prophet, either to touch his carcase, or to hurt the ass upon which he rode. This surprising event, which all that passed by were witnesses of, happened, not only to punish the prophet for his disobedience, but also and chiefly, that this miracle joined to the foregoing might convince the *Israelites* that this prophet was sent from God, and that all he had foretold would infallibly come to pass; and this the prophet of *Bethel* acknowledged. Lastly, What happened to this prophet, who was killed by a lion for disobeying the express command of God, and suffering himself to be seduced by the prophet of *Bethel*, shews, that it can never be lawful to disobey the commandments of the Lord; and that when he has made known his will to us, we are inexcusable if we depart from it upon any pretence, and suffer ourselves to be seduced by those who attempt to withdraw us from our duty.

C H A P. XIV.

I. **J** *Eroboam*, king of *Israel*, having a son sick, sends his wife to inquire of the prophet *Abijah* whether that sickness was mortal. The prophet foretells the death of his son, and the destruction of his whole family, because of the idolatrous worship he had set up among the *Israelites*. II. *Rehoboam* and his subjects fall into idolatry; and God, to punish them, causes *Shishak* king of *Egypt* to come up against them, who took the treasure of the temple of *Jerusalem*, and carried away great spoils. *Rehoboam* dies when he had reigned seventeen years, and is succeeded by *Abijah* his son.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first observation we are to make here is, that when *Jeroboam* wanted to consult the prophet *Abijah*, to know what would be the event of his son's sickness, he ordered his queen not to say who she was. This he did, because, knowing himself to be guilty of idolatry, he durst not make himself known. But God told *Abijah* that the wife of *Jeroboam* was coming to him, which must needs surprise her very much; and the prophet, by God's command, declared to her, that not only the young prince should die, but the whole family of *Jeroboam* should be destroyed; because by his idolatry he had provoked God, who had set him upon the throne. Thus the very same prophet, who had formerly foretold that he should reign over the ten tribes, and that if he kept the law of God he would bless him, and continue the kingdom to his posterity, assured him of the death of his son, and the utter destruction of his family. This should have taught *Jeroboam* and his subjects, that the worship of idols, which they had introduced, must be odious in the sight of the Lord. All these threatenings were accomplished; the son of *Jeroboam* died at the very instant *Abijah* had foretold; and some time after all his family were destroyed. Thus does God punish those who forget his favours and their own duty, who are the authors of impiety, and give offence by their wicked lives. There is one circumstance very remarkable in this history. The prophet told the wife of *Jeroboam*, that God would take the son that was sick out of this world, because to him alone, of all the family of *Jeroboam*, he had found something good. When God takes young people, in whom he has implanted some good dispositions, it is because he loves them. By this means he secures their innocence from the temptations to which they

would be exposed, and preserves them from the miseries in which they would be involved by living longer. On the second part of this chapter, we must observe, that *Reboboam*, king of *Judah*, instead of improving under God's chastening hand, who had suffered ten tribes to revolt from him, countenanced and confirmed the idolatry which his father *Solomon* had begun, and with that all manner of uncleanness and irregularity. Men too commonly act in this manner; they neither amend by the long-suffering, nor by the corrections of the Almighty, and so expose themselves to new misfortunes, as it happened to *Reboboam* and his subjects. The king of *Egypt* came against them, and carried off their treasures, and the most valuable things in the temple, and in the king's palace. This should have taught this prince and his subjects, that if they continued to provoke God, he would at last forsake them, and deliver the city and temple of *Jerusalem* into the hands of strangers and unbelievers.

C H A P. XV.

I. **A** *Bijam*, son of *Reboboam* king of *Judah*, reigns three years, and continues in the sins and idolatry of his father. II. He was succeeded by *Aza* his son, who reigned forty years. This prince destroyed idolatrous worship; he called in the assistance of *Benbadad*, king of *Syria*, when he was attacked by *Baasha* king of *Israel*: *Jehoshaphat* his son succeeded him. III. *Nadab*, the second king of *Israel*, son of *Jeroboam*, reigns two years. *Baasha*, conspiring against him, kills him, and reigns in his stead.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IT appears from the history of *Abijam*, that he did not improve by the misfortunes of his father *Reboboam*,

Jeroboam, but imitated his vices ; and that nevertheless, God, in consideration of the promises he had made to *David*, gave him a son to succeed him, and spared *Jerusalem*. God often grants favours to persons unworthy of them, and sometimes spares ungodly children for the piety of their fathers. As for *Asa*, king of *Judah*, he gave proofs of his piety, in labouring to abolish the idolatry which *Solomon* and *Rehoboam* his predecessors had set up. Wherein he has set an example which should stir up princes to remove iniquity, and promote the true service of God in all their states and dominions. But *Asa* sinned, when he was attacked by the king of *Israel*, and applied to the king of *Syria* for assistance. We learn in the sixteenth chapter of the second book of *Chronicles*, that this proceeding displeased the Lord, and that the end of *Asa's* reign did not answer to the beginning of it. When men who have a sense of religion suffer themselves to be off their guard, they easily stray from their duty, and rob themselves of their title to the divine protection. On the reign of *Nadab*, the second king of *Israel*, we are to observe, that as he followed the impiety and idolatry of his father, he reigned but two years, and perished in a miserable manner, being slain by *Baasha*. This was the just judgment of God upon the family of *Jeroboam*, who having set up an idolatrous worship in the kingdom of the ten tribes, was punished in the person of his son, as *Solomon*, who had been guilty of a like sin, was punished in the person of his son *Rehoboam* ; but with this difference, that God preserved the family of *Solomon* upon the throne, while the family of *Jeroboam* was extinguished ; *Baasha* having destroyed the whole house of that prince, without leaving one person alive, as the prophet *Abijah* had foretold. This curse, which so visibly fell upon the family of *Jeroboam*, was to the *Israelites* an evident proof, how

much God abhorred the idolatry which *Jeroboam* had introduced, and that the family of *David* should always subsist. God takes severe vengeance on those who cause iniquity to abound; their glory never lasts long, the wrath of God pursues them, and even often falls heavy upon their posterity.

C H A P. XVI.

I. **T**HIS chapter contains the history of four kings of *Israel*, who all reigned in the time of *Asa* king of *Judah*, namely, *Baasha*, *Ela*, *Zimri*, and *Omri*. The prophet *Jehu* declares to *Baasha*, that God would utterly destroy his house because of his idolatry. This king died when he had reigned twenty four years. II. *Elah* his son, reigned two years, and was the fourth king of *Israel*. III. *Zimri*, who was the fifth king, slew him, and destroyed the whole family of *Baasha*, but reigned no more than seven days; and the people rising up against him, he burnt himself in his palace. IV. After his death, *Tibni* and *Omri* disputed the kingdom, but *Omri* prevailed, and reigned twelve years; he was the sixth king, and built *Samaria*, which was afterwards the capital of the kingdom of *Israel*. All these kings were idolators. *Omri* being dead, *Abab* his son succeeded, who was more wicked than any of his predecessors; he married *Jezebel*, daughter of the king of the *Sidonians*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I N this chapter we observe, that *Baasha*, after he had, by God's command, rooted out all the descendants of *Jeroboam*, was himself rejected by God because of his idolatry, and his family destroyed as *Jeroboam's* had been, and as the prophet *Jehu* had declared. *Elah* his son reigned but two years, and
Zimri

Zimri having conspired against him, slew him and all the rest of *Baasha's* family, without leaving one of them alive. Afterwards, *Zimri*, whom God had made use of to fulfil the threatnings he had denounced against *Baasha*, came to an end worthy the crime he had committed in murdering his king, and laid violent hands upon himself. *Omri*, an idolatrous prince, reigned after him, and next *Abab*, who exceeded in wickedness all those that went before him. We see clearly, in the series of all these kings of *Israel*, that divine vengeance pursues the wicked, and particularly wicked princes. When God has made use of them to do justice, and to execute the decrees of his providence, he cuts them off, and destroys them one by the other. But we must take notice, that all these kings, notwithstanding the warnings given them by God, and the examples they had before their eyes, continued to offend him, by keeping up idolatry in their kingdom for reasons of state and principles of false policy. When men do only consult their passions and their interest, and worldly considerations prevail with them, nothing can overcome their obstinacy; the most express warnings, and the most remarkable instances of divine justice, are useless and unprofitable; and therefore the Lord is at length provoked to cast them off, and forsake them utterly.

C H A P. XVII.

THE history of the prophet *Elijah*, who lived in the reign of *Abab*, king of *Israel*, begins in this chapter; in which there are four things to be observed. I. *Elijah* forewarns *Abab* of a drought that should last three years and a half, which was followed by a great famine. II. God in a miraculous manner feeds *Elijah* near the brook *Cherith*. III. He supports him at *Zarephath*, near *Zidon*, at a widow's,

whose meal and oil the prophet multiplied. IV. He raises to life the son of that widow.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE history of *Elijah* is to be read and meditated with great care and attention, since he was one of the greatest prophets that ever was in *Israel*; and the most remarkable for his zeal, and for the extraordinary and miraculous actions of his life. It must be observed in general upon this history, that God, in his great goodness, raised up *Elijah* among the ten tribes where idolatry abounded, and at the time when *Abab*, a very wicked king, was going to introduce a species of idolatry, still more abominable than that introduced by his predecessors. The more the *Israelites* departed from God, the more powerful means did God make use of to recover them. The extraordinary drought and famine which afflicted the kingdom of *Israel* at that time, for three years and six months, which is taken notice of by the profane writers, tended to the same end. The Lord intended by this means to punish this people, who were engaged in idolatry, and prepare them to receive what *Elijah* should declare in the name of the Lord, to recover them to their duty; and would have this drought denounced against king *Abab* by the prophet *Elijah*, to teach him and all the *Israelites* that it came from the Lord, who was the only true God. The miraculous manner in which *Elijah* was fed near the brook *Cherith*, and afterwards in the house of a widow whose meal and oil were multiplied, is a proof of the care God took of his prophet; and shews us, that God takes care of those that fear him in times of danger, and feeds them in the time of dearth, as the scripture elsewhere expresses it. Our Lord observes upon this history, that *Elijah* was sent to *Zarephath*, to a woman who was a stranger, rather than to the land of *Israel*, because

because the *Israelites* were not worthy that God should work miracles for their sakes. By this too *Jesus Christ* meant to teach the people of *Nazareth*, that God does not usually bestow his favours on those who are not disposed to make a good use of them. Lastly, We see in this chapter, that *Elijah* brought to life the son of that widow with whom he lodged. This was an unheard of miracle, and must make *Elijah* be considered as the prophet of the Lord, and fill him likewise with confidence in God, in the troublesome times in which he lived. This resurrection of the son of the widow of *Zarephath*, is likewise a proof and type of the general resurrection, which now and then God thought fit to give the *Jews* examples of, to confirm them in the belief and expectation of another life.

C H A P. XVIII.

I. **G**OD sends *Elijah* to king *Ahab*, to acquaint him that the famine and the drought were almost at an end; and the prophet gives the king notice of his coming, by *Obadiab* the governor of *Ahab's* house, who was a man that feared God. II. *Elijah* presents himself before the king, and reproaches him with his idolatry. III. He gathers together all the people, and the prophets of *Baal*, upon mount *Carmel*, and there having proved to them by a miracle that *Baal* was nothing more than an idol, and confounded the false prophets, he caused them all to be put to death. IV. After which God sent rain, and the famine ceased.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are several considerations to be made on this chapter; as, I. That God having resolved to put an end to the drought and famine,

which had afflicted the kingdom of *Israel*, was pleased to promise rain by *Elijah*, as he had foretold the drought; that *Ahab* and all his people might learn that there was no other God but the Lord, whose minister the prophet was. II. Let us take notice of the piety of *Obadiab*, governor of the king's house, who living in a wicked court, and under an idolatrous prince who destroyed the prophets of the Lord, hid and fed an hundred of these prophets, and had so great a respect for *Elijah*. This example shews, that in the worst of times and places, there are always some good people to be found; and this noble action of *Obadiab* is an example to great men to love religion, and to protect its true ministers. III. But above all, we must observe the wonderful zeal and courage with which *Elijah* reproached *Ahab* for his impiety, without dreading the wrath of the king, who was provoked against him. But God, who inspired *Elijah* with so much resolution, restrained the malice of *Ahab*, and even disposed him to do what *Elijah* desired, 'and to assemble together the prophets of *Baal* and *Jezebel* on mount *Carmel*. IV. The method *Elijah* proposed to prove that *Baal* was nothing but a mere idol, shews how great his faith was, and that he was firmly persuaded God would hear him. V. This prophet wrought a very remarkable miracle, when, in the presence of *Ahab* and the *Israelites*, he caused fire to come down from heaven upon his sacrifice, which the false prophets could not do with all their prayers and superstitious ceremonies. Then it appeared very plainly that *Baal* was only an idol, and that his ministers were mere impostors. The effect of this miracle was very remarkable, since all the people cried out, *The Lord, he is God*; and then, at *Elijah's* command, put the prophets of *Baal* to death. Moreover, it is to be considered, that *Elijah*, in commanding the false prophets to be put

to

to death, did only follow the direction given in the law, where God expressly commanded, that those should be put to death who drew away the people to idolatry. These words of *Elijah* to the *Israelites*, *How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; and if Baal be God, follow him;* deserve to be seriously considered. As God could not endure the lukewarmness of the *Israelites*, who were divided between the worship of God and the worship of idols; so neither would he have us divide our love between him and the world. Lastly, We see that God, in his great goodness to his people, sent rain; but he sent it not till the people had given public marks of their repentance: and as, at the word of *Elijah* the heaven had been so long shut up, so the rain came at the word of the same prophet. All this series of miracles was designed to recover the ten tribes from their idolatrous worship, and to preserve the knowledge of the true God in that kingdom, which would otherwise have been almost entirely extinguished under the reign of *Abab*. The apostle *St James* makes a particular reflection on the heavens being shut and opened by *Elijah's* prayers, when he says in the fifth chapter of his epistle, *The fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruits.*

C H A P. XIX.

I. **Q**UEEN *Jezebel*, wife of king *Abab*, endeavouring to put *Elijah* to death, he flies into the wilderness; but God sent an angel to him, who comforted him, and brought him food; after which,
he

he was forty days and forty nights without eating any thing, and came to mount *Horeb*. II. There the Lord appeared to him, and acquainted him that he was not the only prophet of the true God; and that there were still in *Israel* many persons who did not worship the idol *Baal*. III. He orders him to anoint *Hazael* king of *Syria*, *Jehu* king of *Israel*, and *Elisha* a prophet.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE see here, I. That queen *Jezabel*, instead of being moved at the miracles wrought by *Elijah*, in confounding the priests of *Baal* on mount *Carmel*, and making it rain after so great a drought, which had lasted so long, vowed to put the prophet to death. This resolution of hers, shews the extreme wickedness and hardness of her heart. But when men are arrived to a certain degree of wickedness, they grow more and more obstinate; and that which ought to soften their hearts and humble them, only serves to make them more insolent. II. The grief which the prophet *Elijah* then endured, and his prayer to God to take him out of the world, shewed his great zeal, though attended with some frailty. Those who love God sincerely are all animated with the same zeal, and nothing afflicts them more sensibly, nor makes them more uneasy, than to see iniquity abound among men. III. God, to comfort and strengthen *Elijah*, sent an angel to him, and supported him miraculously for forty days by one meal; he was likewise pleased to appear to him in a vision, and assure him to his comfort, that he had yet reserved seven thousand souls in the kingdom of *Israel*, who had not bowed the knee to *Baal*. Here we learn, that God loves and comforts those who afflict themselves for the interest of his glory; that in the most corrupt times, there is always a remnant of elect, that

that serve God with purity, and that therefore we should never lose courage at any time. This is *St Paul's* remark on this passage, in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the *Romans*. Lastly, God commanded *Elijah* to anoint *Hazael* to be king of *Syria*, *Jehu* king of *Israel*, and *Elisba* to be prophet in his room. These three persons were chosen by God to execute his judgments upon the house of *Abab*, as the sequel of this history informs us. Now since God gave kings to the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, and raised them up prophets endued with extraordinary gifts, as *Elijah* and *Elisba* were, it is plain he took care of his people, and had not forsaken them. We see too, by *Elijah's* anointing *Hazael* king of *Syria*, that God gave kings when he thought fit to the neighbouring nations, and that the prophets of the Lord were respected among them. Thus God pulls down and sets up kings; and takes care at all times to raise up prophets and teachers in his church, in the stead of those whom he takes to himself out of the world.

C H A P. XX.

I. **B**ENHADAD, king of *Syria*, makes war against *Abab* king of *Israel*. II. A prophet foretels to *Abab*, that God would deliver him by a small number of persons, which happened afterwards. III. *Benbadad*, having attacked *Abab* a second time, was again defeated, and forced to sue for peace and for his life; both which *Abab* granted him, and even made a new covenant with him, for which he was re-proved by a prophet.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are to observe here, that though *Abab* was an idolatrous and wicked king, yet God granted

granted him twice the victory over the *Syrians*. This God did to punish the pride of *Benbadad* and the *Syrians*, because they had attacked him unjustly; and above all because they had blasphemed the God of *Israel*, saying the Lord was the God of the hills, and not the God of the valleys. He did it likewise to give *Abab* proofs of his goodness and long suffering; and to teach him and all the people how much they were to blame to continue in their idolatry, and not to worship the Lord alone, who thus displayed his power in their favour. And that they might not doubt but God was the giver of the victory, a prophet of the Lord was sent to promise it to *Abab*, and to assure him it should be obtained by a small number of people. This history shews, that God confounds the proud, and punishes such as fall upon others unjustly; and that he gives marks of his bounty even to the greatest sinners, to invite them to repentance. God reprov'd *Abab* by a prophet, for sparing *Benbadad* and making a league with him; because God would have had *Abab* cut off *Benbadad*, who was a haughty and unjust prince, and humble the pride and bring down the power of the *Syrians*.

C H A P. XXI.

I. **A** Man named *Naboth* having refused to sell his vineyard to king *Abab*, *Jezebel* the queen caused him to be stoned to death, upon the deposition of two false witnesses. II. *Elijah* was sent to him by God, to reproach him with this and all his other crimes, and declares, that all his family should be rooted out; that the dogs should lick his blood, and should eat *Jezebel* his wife. III. *Abab*, terrified with these threatnings, humbled himself; whereupon

whereupon God told him, that they should not be executed till after his death.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS history furnishes us with many serious reflections. I. The consideration of the crimes *Abab* committed to procure *Naboth's* vineyard, teaches us, never to covet our neighbours goods; that such desires are criminal, and often produce fatal consequences, and lead us into the commission of great sins. *Abab's* guilt was the greater in this respect, as what he required of *Naboth* was contrary to the law of God, which required inheritances to be preserved in the families they belonged to. II. The means *Jezebel* made use of to procure *Naboth's* death, bringing false witnesses to accuse him of blasphemy, shew that she was a woman of the most consummate wickedness and impiety; but what increases our horror, is to see that false witnesses were found on this occasion, and judges wicked enough to condemn the innocent. As there have always been unjust princes, so there have always been persons capable of undertaking any thing to please them. III. Though *Jezebel* gave order for putting *Naboth* to death; yet *Abab* was also guilty of the murder; not only because he was the occasion of it, but because he consented to the pernicious counsel of his wife, and after *Naboth's* death took possession of his vineyard. He who consents to a crime, and thinks to make his advantage of it, is as guilty as he who orders or commits it. IV. *Elijah*, just at the time when *Abab* was going to take possession of the vineyard of *Naboth*, denounced against him the severe judgments of God. This shews, that punishment follows close after great crimes, and especially violence, injustice and the shedding of blood; and that the possession of goods unjustly gotten is seldom lasting or happy. V. The description in this chapter of *Abab's* excessive wickedness,

edness, where it is said of him ; that “ there was none like unto *Abab*, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord ;” this description justifies the severe threatnings God denounced against him, and should inspire us with great fear of falling into this highest pitch of wickedness. However, we are told at the end of this history, that *Abab*, terrified at the menaces of *Elijah*, humbled himself, and failed and lay in sackcloth ; and that God, seeing his humiliation, told *Elijah* he would not bring the evil upon his house in his days. This is a very remarkable circumstance, an example of the infinite goodness of God towards the greatest sinners, when they humble themselves before him. Here let us take notice, that if the repentance of *Abab* appeased the Lord for a time, because there was something of sincerity in it, though it was not of long continuance ; much more may we imagine, will those who repent with all their heart, and persevere in their repentance, infallibly obtain from the divine mercy the pardon of their sins.

C H A P. XXII.

I. **J**EHOSHAPHAT, the fourth king of *Judah* ; joins with *Abab* king of *Israel* to make war against the *Syrians* ; but desires first to enquire of the Lord. Upon this the prophet *Micaiah* being consulted, foretold, that God would not prosper the enterprize, though an hundred false prophets promised *Abab* good success. This prince, enraged against *Micaiah*, ordered him to be put in prison, and then gave the *Syrians* battle, but was killed in the engagement, and *Jehoshaphat* narrowly escaped with his life. II. At the end of this chapter, we have a brief account of *Jehoshaphat*’s reign, who was a pious king, and of *Abaziah*’s reign, who was the eighth king of *Israel*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE ill success of *Jehoshaphat's* union with wicked *Abab*, shews, that we cannot too studiously avoid uniting with wicked men, if we would not be involved in their miseries. II. *Jehoshaphat* shewed his piety in desiring *Abab* to send for a prophet of the Lord, before he would engage in the battle against the king of *Syria*; but he was guilty of a great fault in going to the war, instead of following the advice of *Micaiah*. It is always right to consult what the will of God is; but it is of no importance to know his will, if we do not follow it. III. It is observable in this history, that king *Abab* gave credit to the false prophets who promised him victory, rather than to *Micaiah*, who spoke to him in the name of the Lord. Most men love to be flattered, and are angry with those who speak the truth with sincerity; but God delivers up those who thus act to their own blindness. Thus it happened to *Abab*; God seeing his obstinacy, suffered him to be seduced by false prophets; but did not inspire them with their lying spirit, nor was he the cause of this king's obduracy. The event proved the truth of *Micaiah's* prediction: *Abab* was killed; the dogs licked his blood, as the prophet *Elijah* had foretold, and *Jehoshaphat* would have lost his life in the battle had not God preserved him. Such is commonly the end of those designs we engage in contrary to the will of God. Lastly, We collect from this chapter, that *Jehoshaphat* was a religious prince, since he banished, as much as possibly he could, idolatry and uncleanness out of his kingdom. This was far from being the case with *Aba-ziah*, king of *Israel*; and therefore he was not long before he felt the divine vengeance; as we find in the sequel of this history.

The end of the first book of KINGS.

T H E

T H E
S E C O N D B O O K
O F
K I N G S.

A R G U M E N T.

The second book of kings contains the history of the kings of Judah and Israel, from the end of the reign of Jehoshaphat and Ahab, to the ruin of the two kingdoms. In this book we are informed, how the kingdom of Israel was governed by impious and idolatrous kings, and at last destroyed by the king of Assyria, who carried the ten tribes into captivity; as we read in the first seventeen chapters. We have likewise in this book, the history of the kings of Judah, from Jehoshaphat to Zedekiah; in whose reign the city and temple of Jerusalem were taken and destroyed by the Chaldeans, and the Jews carried captives to Babylon. All this happened in the space of three hundred years.

C H A P. I.

I. **T**HE Moabites rebel against Abaziah the eighth king of Israel; who being sick, sends to consult the idol Baalzebub, to know what would be the event of his sickness; but
Elijah

Elijah meeting the messengers of *Abaziah*, reproved them for having recourse to idols, rather than the true God; and told them the king would die. II. Afterwards, the prophet caused fire from heaven to come down and consume two parties of soldiers and their captains, whom *Abaziah* had sent to apprehend him; and then he himself went to the king, and foretold him of his death, which happened after *Abaziah* had reigned two years. He was succeeded by *Jehoram* his brother.

• REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

IN this chapter we may observe, I. That the threatnings God denounced against king *Abab*, began to be executed in the reign of his son *Abaziah*. The *Moabites* rebelled against him; and he had a fall which proved mortal; of which he died, after he had seen two of his companies destroyed by fire from heaven. II. That that prince, instead of growing better by his sickness, and by the corrections of the almighty, arrived at such a pitch of wickedness as to consult idols. God chastens sinners to bring them to himself; but when they take occasion, even from his corrections, to offend him with new crimes, this denotes the last degree of obstinacy and incorrigibleness. III. It is to be observed, that though *Elijah* consumed by fire from heaven the captains and soldiers whom the king had sent to take him, he did not do it out of a spirit of revenge, nor of his own accord, but by a divine impulse and command: this appears in God's displaying his omnipotence, and making fire to fall from heaven at the word of *Elijah*. God wrought this miracle to secure the prophet, and to punish the idolators; to put a stop to the fury of *Abaziah*, and to teach that prince and his subjects to fear the true God. So that this action of *Elijah* does not justify revenge; as our Lord

teaches his disciples, when, in imitation of *Elijah*, they would have caused fire to come down from heaven upon the *Samaritans*, who had refused to receive them. After a very short reign *Abaziab* died; and his death happening according to the prediction of *Elijah*, may be looked upon as a just judgment from God on that wicked and idolatrous prince.

CHAP. II.

I. **T**HE prophet *Elijah* is taken up into heaven.
 II. *Elisha*, his disciple and successor, receives his spirit, and works several miracles; which shewed that God had appointed him to be a prophet in *Israel*, as *Elijah* had been.

REFLECTIONS.

THE taking up the prophet *Elijah* into heaven is a wonderful event; in which we see how God was pleased to reward the extraordinary zeal of this great prophet; and to teach men at the same time, that he reserves in heaven a blessed state for those that shall have served him faithfully. It appears from the circumstances of this history, from what preceded and what followed the ascension of *Elijah*, that it was known, not only to *Elisha*, but to a great many of the sons of the prophets, who were on the other side of *Jordan*, when *Elijah* was taken up. Besides this, we have in the ascension of *Elijah* a type of that of *Jesus Christ*; which is yet a stronger proof to us, that there is a better life after this prepared for the righteous. *Elisha*'s perseverance in following *Elijah*, that he might be witness of his departure, and his earnest request that he might receive a double portion of his spirit, is a proof of the zeal and faith of *Elisha*; which he was rewarded for, since he saw his master taken up, and
 was

was endued with the same gifts as he had been. We ought with the same zeal and perseverance to seek for the necessary gifts of God's holy spirit; and if we apply to *Jesus Christ* for them, he will grant them to us in an abundant measure. The miracles wrought by *Elisha*, immediately after the ascension of *Elijah*, dividing the waters of *Jordan*, and healing those of *Jericho*, tended to assure him, that God would be with him as he had been with *Elijah*; and to convince the sons of the prophets, and all the people of *Israel*, that *Elisha* was a prophet in an extraordinary manner sent by him. The death of the forty two children of *Bethel*, who were devoured by two she-bears, was designed by God to confirm the calling of *Elisha* among an idolatrous people; to terrify the king of *Israel* and his people; and to punish the inhabitants of *Bethel*, the place where idolatry was publicly practised, and where the prophets of the Lord were despised and rejected. It was expedient such examples as these should now and then be made, and that God should give proofs of his wrath, in a kingdom where the worship of idols was appointed and supported by public authority.

C H A P. III.

I. **J EIIORAM**, the ninth king of *Israel*, assisted by *Jehoshaphat*, king of *Judah*, and the king of *Edom*, makes war upon the *Moabites*, who had revolted from his brother *Abaziah*. II. The army of these three kings being ready to perish for want of water, *Elisha* procured them water, and promised them the victory. III. The *Moabites* were defeated, and their king offered his son a sacrifice upon the walls of the city of *Kirbaraseth*, whither he had retired; after which the war ended.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this history we are to observe, I. That *Jehoram* was not so bad as *Abah* his father, since he put down the idolatry of *Baal*; but he preserved the worship of the golden calves, which *Jereboam* had introduced. This prince had some good notions; but had not piety nor resolution enough to abolish idolatry intirely. *Jehoram* represents those sinners who are willing to do something for God, and renounce some sins, but retain others, and cannot resolve to renounce them all. II. The army of the kings of *Judab*, *Israel* and *Edom* wanting water, *Elisba* was called for, and God gave them water by the ministry of that prophet; after which they defeated the *Midianites*. As the sacred history informs us, that God granted *Jehoram* this victory for the sake of *Jehoshaphat*, king of *Judab*, who feared the Lord; we see, that God does often do good to those that are unworthy of it for the sake of pious persons, in love to whom he displays his power and his goodness, even for wicked men. It may likewise be added, that God favoured *Jehoram* upon this occasion, because he was not so bad as his father *Abah*, or his brother *Ahaziah*, and had put down the worship of *Baal*. God is so gracious, that he even rewards the little good there is in sinners, and by that means shews, that if they did sincerely turn to him they would feel the effects of his love. This victory, which God vouchsafed to *Jehoram* by the prophet *Elisba*'s means, should have induced *Jehoram* to have rooted out idolatry entirely, which he did not; but by persisting in his sins, he drew upon himself the divine vengeance. The horrible and unnatural action of the king of *Moab*, who sacrificed his own son, is a very remarkable circumstance; which shews, that among those idolatrous nations all sense of humanity and tenderness was lost; and that rage and despair hurry
on

on wicked men to the most detestable actions. The wicked usually give themselves up to excess of grief; whereas those who know God and fear him, have always recourse to him with resignation and submission, in their greatest troubles and the most disagreeable events.

C H A P. IV.

THIS chapter contains the relation of several miracles of *Elisha*. I. He multiplied the widow's oil. II. Going to lodge at the house of a woman of *Shunem*, he promised that God would give her a son; which son dying, he raised him to life again. III. He made the pottage wholesome which before could not be eat. IV. He fed an hundred men with twenty loaves of barley and some ears of corn.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN the several miracles wrought by the prophet *Elisha*, we ought to take notice of and to admire the power of God, and at the same time his goodness towards the *Israelites*; since all those miracles tended to restore them to the worship of the true God, and recover them from idolatry. II. We are to observe, that if *Elisha* multiplied the oil of a widow who was distressed by her creditors, and if he obtained a son for the *Shunamite*, and afterwards raised him from the dead, it was because these women and their husbands feared the Lord; so that it appears very clearly from these examples, that God displays his power in favour of those that fear him, and that he delivers them from their distress. Observe, III. That God, after he had given a son to the *Shunamite*, was pleased he should die, that he might restore him to her again by a miracle. The

proceeding of this woman, who, as soon as her son was dead, went immediately to seek for *Elisha*, shews her surprising faith, and her hope that the same prophet who had promised the birth of the child, would restore him to life; and she was not disappointed of her hope. God often afflicts his children in the most sensible manner, that he may afterwards give them stronger tokens of his love, by delivering them and giving them a happy issue out of their afflictions, and making them serve to confirm them in the faith, and in the fear of the Lord. IV. We must consider, that though the miracles of *Elisha* were many and great; yet they are much inferior to those of *Jesus Christ*, who by a word alone, and in an instant, healed the sick and raised the dead; and that if *Elisha* fed an hundred persons with twenty loaves of barley, our Lord fed several thousand with a few barley loaves and small fishes, as is recorded in the gospel.

C H A P. V.

I. **N***Aaman*, general of the king of *Syria*'s army, is cured of a leprosy, after having washed himself seven times in *Jordan*, by the direction of *Elisha*. By this miracle he was convinced that the God of *Israel* was the only true God; and promised, that he would offer no more sacrifices to any but to the Lord; and therefore begged of the prophet he might have leave to take with him some of the earth of the land of *Israel*, to build an altar to sacrifice to the true God. II. *Naaman* would have made him some presents, which *Elisha* refused; but *Gebazi*, his servant, having taken a part of those presents secretly, the prophet punishes him for it, by smiting him and his posterity with the leprosy.

REFLECTIONS.

I. **T**HE healing of *Naaman* is one of the most remarkable of all *Elisha's* miracles. God was pleased this miracle should be wrought, to teach the *Syrians*, who were strangers and idolators, that the God of *Israel* was the only true God; which was the reason why the prophet *Elisha* ordered *Naaman* to wash himself in the waters of *Jordan*, that being a river in the land of *Israel*. *Naaman* at first despised the prophet's order to wash in *Jordan*, imagining that was not a proper way to heal him; and yet that very way he found he was cured of his leprosy. We should never despise the means that God thinks fit to make use of to communicate his favours to us, though they appear weak and simple; but we should rather therein acknowledge and admire his power and goodness. II. *Naaman* being healed, promised to worship no other but the true God; and to go no more into the temples of idols, unless it were to wait upon the king his master; which he thought he might do without idolatry, as it was only a duty of a civil nature, and belonging to his office; and he had actually renounced the worship of idols, and declared he would never more sacrifice to any but the true God. From this behaviour of *Naaman*, we may learn to testify our gratitude to God when he bestows any blessing on us; and never to do any thing that may offend him, or wound our own consciences. III. *Elisha's* refusal of the rich presents of *Naaman*, must needs have made great impression upon the mind of this general, and inspired him with still greater reverence for the true God, whose minister *Elisha* was. This is a noble example of disinterestedness, which ought above all to be imitated by the ministers of the Lord. Lastly, What happened to *Gebazi*, who for lying unto *Naaman*,

man, and taking presents from him secretly, became a leper, and entailed the leprosy on all his posterity, demands our attention. *Elisha* smote *Gebazi* with this disease, because what he had done tended to bring disgrace upon the true religion, and was the mark of a mean self-interested spirit, and a corrupt heart; especially after his master had refused *Naaman's* presents. This shews us that God knows our sins, though committed in secret, and will punish them; and particularly that his wrath pursues not only the unrighteous, but in general all those that are given to covetousness and dishonest again; and that goods acquired by wicked means do carry a curse with them; which curse often descends from parents to their children.

C H A P. VI.

WE have here a relation of several miraculous actions of the prophet *Elisha*. I. He caused the iron of a hatchet to swim upon the water. II. He revealed to the king of *Israel* the designs of the king of *Syria*; at which the king of *Syria* being provoked, sent a great host to take the prophet in the city of *Dathan*: but God sent an heavenly host to his assistance; and *Elisha* having smote the *Syrians* with blindness, led them to *Samaria*; but forbade the king of *Israel* to do them any harm. III. Some time afterwards the king of *Syria* besieged *Samaria*, where the famine was so great that two women eat one of their children. The king of *Israel* believing that *Elisha* was the cause of all these misfortunes, swore that he would put him to death.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE continue to see here the great wonders that God wrought in the kingdom of *Israel* by the means of *Elisha*. The end of these miracles

was to preserve among the *Israelites* the knowledge of the God of their fathers, and to keep up the fear of God in the hearts of those good men that still remained in that kingdom. This was the reason there were at that time so many disciples of the prophets, here called *sons of the prophets*, who lived among the ten tribes. With the same view, and to confound the *Syrians*, who were idolators, God warned *Jehoram*, king of *Israel*, of the designs of the king of *Syria*, by *Elisha*, to whom they were revealed; and even delivered into the hands of the prophet, and by his means into the hands of *Jehoram*, the *Syrians* who were come to besiege the city of *Doban*. God, on this occasion, miraculously protected *Elisha*, by sending the heavenly hosts to his assistance, and smiting the *Syrians* with blindness; which is a proof of the care God takes of his faithful servants, and of those that fear him. The prophet gave likewise at this time a proof of his meekness and gentleness; he only desired to make the *Syrian* sensible of God's power; he conducted them to *Samaria*, and delivered them to the king of *Israel*; who was not suffered to hurt them; but treated them in *Samaria*, and dismissed them afterwards with all the humanity and civility imaginable. Thus should we treat all men, even our enemies, with equity and moderation. In the relation of the dreadful famine that was in *Samaria*, we see the judgments of God upon that city, and the accomplishment of the curses that *Aij's* had denounced against the *Israelites*; and particularly, where he says that mothers should eat their own children, in the time of the siege and straits where-with their enemies should distress them. Lastly, It is something very remarkable, that king *Jehoram*, after all that God had done for him, and the miracles of *Elisha*, which he had either been witness of, or had been well informed of them, trusted the

the divine assistance when he found himself besieged, and vowed to put *Elisha* to death as the cause of those calamities which he himself was the occasion of; whereby he gave proofs of his extreme ingratitude, and hardness of heart. The wicked are ungrateful in prosperity; and, instead of humbling themselves in adversity, fret and harden themselves under those troubles which ought to recover them to a sense of their duty.

C H A P. VII.

I. **T**HE city of *Samaria* being besieged by the *Syrians*, and pressed by famine, the prophet *Elisha* foretels that the inhabitants should have great plenty; and a captain deriding the prediction, he tells him he should see the plenty but not be the better for it. II. The *Syrians* being terrified by a noise which God had caused them to hear, fled the same night; and both *Elisha's* prophecies were fulfilled.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TO make a good use of what we have now read, three things are chiefly to be observed; I. That *Samaria* being besieged, and reduced to the utmost extremity by famine, God foretold by the prophet *Elisha* that the famine should soon cease, and be followed by a great plenty. God was pleased that *Elisha* should foretel this deliverance and this plenty, that all might know they proceeded from God, and that the inhabitants of *Samaria* might give God the glory. This was likewise a very extraordinary instance of the divine goodness and long-suffering towards the people engaged in idolatry, and a cruel and impious prince. II. The second reflection is, that although this prediction was very surprising, and contrary to all appearance; yet it was fulfilled in

one day; and *Samaria* was delivered at once both from war and famine, and that in a wonderful manner, which no one would ever have thought of; God having terrified the army of the *Syrians* by a noise he made them hear; and so ordering it, that the lepers should go into the enemy's camp, and bring news to the people of *Samaria*, that the *Syrians* had raised the siege. From whence we may infer, that God has always ready the sure means of executing his promises, how difficult soever they may seem to be; and that therefore we should never doubt of their truth, nor fall into distrust or incredulity. III. That which happened to the captain mentioned in this history, is very remarkable. He had laughed at the prophecy of *Elisha*, and said, that if the Lord were to make windows in heaven, so great a plenty would be impossible. But his own experience convinced him of the truth and certainty both of *Elisha's* promise and threatening; and the deliverance of *Samaria* proved his punishment. Infidels and profane men attack the deity with their rash and impious sentiments and discourses; they call in question what God hath revealed, because they think they see difficulties in the way; but they shall be convinced by their own experience that God is true in all that he says; and those who would not believe his word, shall experience the truth of those threatnings he has denounced against wicked men and unbelievers.

C H A P. VIII.

I. **T**HE *Shunamite*, whose son *Elisha* had raised, being returned to the country of *Israel*, which she left on account of the famine, obtained of king *Jehoram* that all her goods should be restored to her. II. *Elisha* being at *Damascus*, and *Benhadad* king of *Syria* sending *Hazael* to consult him

him concerning the event of his sickness, though his sickness was not in itself mortal, foretold that he should die, and that *Hazael* should reign in his stead, and do great harm to the *Israelites*. III. *Joram*, the fifth king of *Judah*, coming to the throne, introduced idolatry; for which God chastened him by the revolt of the *Edomites*, and of the men of *Libnah*. IV. He dying after he had reigned eight years, *Abaziah* his son, who was likewise an idolator, succeeded him, and reigned but one year.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

FROM this chapter we learn, that God has a perfect knowledge of futurity; that his providence rules and governs all things, and watches over those that fear him. This we have a proof of in the notice he gave the *Shunamite* of the tedious famine God was going to afflict the land of *Israel* with. Another surprising effect of providence, we see in that woman's coming to petition the king of *Israel* for her estate, just at the time *Gebazi*, the servant of *Elisha*, was telling that prince how his master had raised from the dead the son of that very woman. *Jehoram's* causing the *Shunamite's* goods to be restored to her, was an act of justice, and a lesson to kings, judges, and all men, to render to every one what belongs to them. The several circumstances of this history serve to confirm the truth of *Elisha's* miracles. That *Benhadad*, king of *Syria*, should tend to know of the prophet *Elisha*, whether he should recover of his illness, proves that this prophet was greatly esteemed even by the neighbouring princes; and that there were in *Syria* many persons who had great reverence for the God of *Israel*. The prophet foretold the death of *Benhadad*, and *Hazael's* succession to the throne of *Syria*. This ought to have convinced the *Syrians*, the *Israelites*, and *Hazael* himself,

himself, that the Lord was the true God, and that by him kings reigned, not only in *Israel* but in all other kingdoms. It is next to be observed, that though this prediction of *Elisba* did certainly give occasion to *Hazael* to kill king *Benbadad* in a horrid and treacherous manner, God could not be said to be the author of that crime; and that if he did suffer *Hazael* to reign and to commit so many cruelties, it was to punish *Benbadad* by his means, who had been so cruel to the *Israelites*; and to punish the *Israelites* themselves, and the family of *Abab* in particular. Thus when events of this nature happen, and there arise tyrannical and cruel princes, or unjust men who do a great deal of mischief, it is to be remembered that this happens by the divine permission; and that God, who employs what instruments he pleases to bring about the wise ends of his providence, often makes use of the wicked to this end; so that by committing the sins which their own wicked hearts lead them to, they execute, without knowing it, and sometimes contrary to their very intention, his judgments, and the designs of his providence. The sacred history remarks that *Joram*, son of the good king *Jehoshaphat*, was a wicked prince; that he was drawn into idolatry by *Atbaliab* his wife, the daughter of *Abab* king of *Israel*; and that after the death of *Joram*, *Abaziah* his son walked in his steps. This is a very sensible proof, that alliances with persons void of religion and virtue are fatal to families, and introduce impiety: however, neither *Joram* nor *Abaziah* escaped unpunished. The *Edomites* revolted from *Joram*; his reign was short and very unfortunate; he died of a cruel and tedious sickness; and his son *Abaziah* too perished in a miserable manner; as the whole is related in the twenty first and twenty second chapter of the second book of *Chronicles*; so
that

that we have in both these kings a very remarkable instance of the judgments of God upon those who offend him, and in particular on those who degenerate from the piety of their predecessors.

C H A P. IX.

I. **A** Prophet, one of *Elisha's* disciples, is ordered to anoint *Jehu* king of *Israel*, in the stead of *Jehoram*; and orders him to root out all the house of *Abab*. II. *Jehu*, being proclaimed king, assembles his forces and goes to *Jezreel*, where he slays *Jehoram*, and causes his body to be cast into the field of *Naboth*. III. He also causes *Abaziah*, king of *Judah*, who came to visit *Jehoram*, to be put to death, and orders *Jezebel*, the widow of king *Abab*, to be thrown out of the window; who was eat up of dogs, as the prophet *Elijah* had foretold.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE anointing *Jehu*, whom God had chosen king of *Israel*, shews that God sets up and putteth down kings as he thinks fit for the execution of his judgments, and to bring about the designs of his providence. What *Jehu* did against the house of *Abab* ought to be looked upon as the work of God, as appears from the several circumstances of this history, which are very remarkable. *Jehu* was made king without expecting it; *Jehoram*, the son of *Abab*, was slain, and thrown into that very field which his father had taken from *Naboth*. *Jehu* then calls to mind *Elijah's* prediction, that God would punish the sons of *Abab* on that very spot. *Jezebel*, that wicked queen, who had done so much mischief, was thrown headlong out of her palace-window, and eat by the dogs. Thus all that the prophet *Elijah* had foretold of *Abab* and his family came

came to pass ; and God severely revenged that king's impiety, who had introduced among the *Israelites* the idolatrous worship of *Baal*. This history shews, that the divine threatnings are never in vain ; that the curse of God pursues wicked princes, and families where impiety reigns. Let us take notice likewise that *Abaziah*, king of *Judab*, because he imitated the kings of *Israel* in their sins and idolatry, and was united with *Jehoram* king of *Israel*, perished with him. Those who become the companions and imitators of the wicked, are involved sooner or later in the same judgments with them.

C H A P. X.

I. **J**EHU puts to death seventy sons of *Abab*, and several of the relations of *Abaziah* king of *Judab*. II. After which, having gathered together all the worshippers of *Baal*, upon pretence of a sacrifice, he caused them all to be slain, and abolished the worship of that idol. III. Notwithstanding, he continued the idolatrous worship which *Jeroboam* had established, by which he provoked the Lord to anger against him. III. Having reigned twenty eight years, he died, and *Jehoahaz* his son succeeded him, and was the eleventh king of *Israel*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN the death of the seventy sons of *Abab*, we see the intire destruction of the family of that impious prince ; which had been predicted by the prophet *Elijah*. This is the third family of the kings of *Israel* which was utterly extinct. The family of *Jeroboam* was first destroyed, then *Baasha's*, and afterwards that of impious *Abab* ; and all of them by the just judgment of God for their idolatry. The king of *Judab* felt too the effects of the divine vengeance ;

vengeance; but the family still subsisted as God had promised. As for that action of *Jehu*, who slew the worshippers of *Baal*, it must be considered, I. That he put them to death justly; God having commanded that such as introduced the worship of false gods should be put to death. II. That this action was to far blameable, as *Jehu* made use of a lye to bring those idolators together; and even of a criminal pretence, in giving out that he would perform a solemn service to *Baal*. Besides, there is a great deal of reason to imagine, that *Jehu* put to death the priests of *Baal*, as well as the sons of *Abah*, as much for reasons of policy and state, as in obedience to God, and out of zeal to his service; since by destroying those who were attached to the interests of *Abah* and *Jezabel* his wife, he strengthened himself in the kingdom. But what proves above all, that the zeal which *Jehu* expressed in executing the divine will was not sincere, is, his not putting away that idolatry which *Jeroboam* had established in the kingdom of the ten tribes, and only taking away the gross idolatry of *Baa*; and therefore we see the scripture remarks, that *Jehu* did not walk in the law of God with all his heart: though God promised the kingdom should descend to his sons to the fourth generation, because he had executed the judgments of God upon the house of *Abah*. *Jehu's* character represents those whose zeal is not pure; who think to satisfy their duty by a partial obedience to the will of God, and by renouncing some of their grossest sins, and glory in it, as *Jehu* did of his zeal for the Lord of hosts. But when men do not renounce every thing that is displeasing in God's sight, particularly the sins they are most prone to, they do not act from a spirit of true zeal, nor can they reasonably expect his approbation. Therefore we find that God chastised this prince by the king of

Syria,

Syria, who gained several victories over him, and got possession of a part of his dominions.

C H A P. XI.

I. **A**FTER the death of *Abaziah*, the sixth king of *Judah*, *Atbaliah* his mother, who was the daughter of *Abab*, and given to idoltry, usurped the kingdom, and put to death all the princes of the seed royal of *Judah*: one only escaped, which was *Jehash*, who was then but a year old, and was concealed, and brought up six years by the care of his aunt, the wife of *Jehoiada* the high priest. II. At the end of six years, *Jehoiada* caused *Jehash* to be proclaimed king, slew *Atbaliah*, and restored religion and the true worship of God.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE learn from the history of the reign of *Atbalah*, who by her cruelty, procured the crown, that God does sometimes permit the enterprises of the wicked to succeed, and usurpers to take possession of states and kingdoms. But in the same history we remark, that he sets bounds to their wickedness, and at last delivers the oppressed. *Jehash*, the son of *Abaziah*, escaped the cruelty, of *Atbaliah*, by the particular interposition of providence; and at the end of a few years, *Atbaliah* received the reward due to her crimes, and religion was restored to its purity. It is a great mercy to any people, when God delivers them from wicked princes, and sets up good ones in their stead. And as this happy revolution was brought about by the care of *Jehoiada*, who did an act of justice in delivering the kingdom from a wicked and foreign queen, and restoring the crown to the lawful heir; we may learn, that it is a great advantage to a state to be under the management of prudent persons,

and such as are zealous for religion and the public good.

C H A P. XII.

JEHOASH, the seventh king of *Judah*, ascending the throne at the age of seven years, in the beginning of his reign was very zealous for religion; but growing corrupt afterwards, as we see in the twenty fourth chapter of the second book of *Chronicles*; he was attacked by *Hazael* king of *Syria*, and was slain in a conspiracy, leaving *Amaziah* his son to succeed him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

KING *Jeboash* for a considerable time gave proof of his piety, and exerted himself with zeal in restoring the service of God, and supporting the interests of religion. But he did not persevere; and was even guilty of very great crimes, as we find recorded in the *Chronicles*; and accordingly he made a miserable end. The history of this prince, who had begun so well and ended so bad, may convince us, that persons who have good intentions, and even zeal, may not only grow remiss and careless, but also err in the grossest manner, when they suffer themselves to be off their guard, and give ear to evil counsels, as *Jeboash* did. This is particularly the case of princes, who after they have been enlightened with the knowledge of God, and have been favoured in a signal manner, at last forsake him.

C H A P. XIII.

I. **J**EHOAHAZ, the eleventh king of *Israel*, was an idolater; for which reason, God stirred up against

against him the king of *Syria*; but having implored the assistance of the Lord he was delivered; notwithstanding which, he persevered in his idolatry. He died in the seventeenth year of his reign, leaving the kingdom to *Joash* his son, who reigned sixteen years. II. *Joash* going to see the prophet *Elisha* that was sick, was told by him, that he should overcome the *Syrians*, but that he should not intirely destroy them. *Elisha* died at that time, and a dead man having touched his bones, came to life again.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **W**E are to observe in the history of *Jehoabaz*, that he was an idolator, like his predecessors; that finding himself attacked by the *Syrians*, he had recourse to God in his prayers, and that God, in love to the children of *Israel*, who were oppressed by the *Syrians*, delivered him; but that this prince, notwithstanding the divine assistance he had experienced, and though he saw himself extremely weakned, still persisted in his idolatry. Such is the usual behaviour of the wicked. They have recourse to God in their distress; but return to their sins as soon as they are delivered, and instead of growing better, are insensible both of his forbearance and his corrections. In the history of king *Joash*, son of *Jehoabaz*, we see, that that prince followed the sinful courses of his father; but that God, however, promised him, by the prophet *Elisha*, that he should vanquish the *Syrians*; on which it is remarked in this chapter, that *Joash* gained these advantages, because God had compassion on the *Israelites*, on account of the covenant he had made with their fathers. God is good and gracious, and thus behaves towards men, bearing long with them before he forsakes them utterly. III. We have here the relation of the death of *Elisha*, whom God called

hence, after he had exercised the prophetic office for above sixty years. The visit *Jeash* king of *Israel* made to *Elisha*, and his great concern at his death, prove that this prince, though engaged in idolatry, had a respect for *Elisha*, and that the prophets of the Lord were somewhat regarded in the kingdom of *Israel*. The memory of that holy prophet ought to be esteemed blessed in the church: his zeal and other virtues ought to be our example, and animate all Christians, especially those who are in any office in the church, to serve God faithfully in their several stations. Lastly, The resurrection of that man who came to life because his dead body had touched the bones of *Elisha*, must needs have made a great impression upon the *Israelites* to whom he was sent. But this miraculous event ought likewise to convince us, that God, who has promised to raise the dead, has power to give them life, and will do it at the last day.

C H A P. XIV.

THIS chapter contains the history of two kings: I. The first was *Amaziah*, the eighth king of *Judah*; who at first behaved with prudence and piety, and gained a victory over the *Edomites*, but falling into idolatry, as we read in the book of *Chronicles*, and declaring war against *Jeash* king of *Israel*, he was taken prisoner by *Jeash*, who pillaged the city and temple of *Jerusalem*; and at last he was conspired against and slain, and *Athariah* his son succeeded him. II. We have here a brief history of *Jerboam* the second, the thirteenth king of *Israel*, who reigned forty

REFLECTIONS.

THE beginning of *Amaziah's* reign was praiseworthy; he was attached to the service of God, and behaved with justice and clemency, sparing the children of those who had murdered his father *Joash*; for which God rewarded him by a victory over the *Edomites*. But as soon as he forsook God, he experienced every kind of misfortune; he saw his country ravaged by the king of *Israel*, and at last miserably perished in a conspiracy, as his father had done. This is a fresh instance, in which we see plainly that those who ungratefully rebel against God, after they have begun well, draw down his just vengeance upon them. There are two reflections to be made on *Jeroboam* the second's reign: one is, that he persisted in the idolatrous worship set up in *Israel*; the other, that, notwithstanding this, God preserved and recovered, under the reign of this prince, the kingdom of *Israel*, which was then very low; which he did in love to his people, who were very much afflicted, and because he had not yet determined to destroy them. This is an instance of God's great goodness, and long-suffering towards guilty princes and their people. Further, it appears from this chapter, that *Jonas*, who was sent to *Nineveh*, prophesied at this time in the kingdom of the ten tribes; and that it was he too, who promised *Jeroboam* the advantages God vouchsafed him. In all this we see the truth of what the scripture so often repeats, that God ceased not to send prophets to the *Israelites*, to turn them from idolatry, and recover them to his service; and that the cause of their rejection, was their refusing to hearken to the remonstrances of his servants, and persisting obstinately in their sins.

C H A P. XV.

I. **A**ZARIAH, otherwise called *Uzziab*, the ninth king of *Judab*, at first adhered to the worship of God; but was smitten with leprosy, for usurping the office of the priesthood. The history of this king we find at length in the twenty sixth chapter of the second book of *Chronicles*. II. We find in this chapter the history of *Zechariah*, *Shallum*, *Menabem*, *Pekahiah*, and *Pekah*, all kings of *Israel*. *Jeroboam*, the second of that name, king of *Israel*, being dead, there was an inter-regnum of about eleven years; at the end of which time *Zechariah*, his son, was made king of *Israel*, and reigned six months: in him the family of *Jehu* was extinct, in the fourth generation, as God had foretold. He was slain by *Shallum*, who reigned but one month; and he was slain by *Menabem*, who reigned ten years, and became tributary to the king of *Affyria*. *Pekahiah* his son was the seventeenth king of *Israel*; he was killed by *Pekah*, in whose time part of the people were carried captive into *Affyria*. *Pekah* was slain by *Hoshea*, who was the nineteenth and last king of *Israel*. All these princes were idolators. III. *Uzziab* king of *Judab* dying, is succeeded by his son *Jotham*, a religious prince; he was the tenth king of *Judab*, and reigned sixteen years.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN the history of king *Azariah*, who, like some of his predecessors, begun well, but did not persevere, and ended his life in a state of sequestration from the crown; we see what is the fate of those who begin well, but grow remiss and forsake their duty. What is to be observed on the reign of *Zechariah*, *Shallum*, *Menabem*, *Pekahiah*, and *Pekah*, kings of *Israel*,

Israel, is, that all those princes were incorrigibly addicted to idolatry, notwithstanding the divine corrections, and though they must needs perceive that God was withdrawing his protection from them. II. That these kings were all unhappy, and perished almost all of them miserably, murdering one another. III. That God then began to deliver the kingdom of *Israel* to their enemies, and that one part of the *Israelites* were carried captive into *Affyria*; which was a plain intimation, that this kingdom was drawing near its end. There is nothing more certainly forebodes the judgments of God, than when neither his corrections, nor his forbearance and long-suffering, can bring men to repentance, nor engage them to return to their duty; and when they have irreligious and impious rulers. The sacred history makes one particular reflection upon the death of king *Zechariah*; which is, that in him the family of *Jebu* was extinct, as God had promised *Jebu*, that his sons should sit upon the throne of *Israel* to the fourth generation. This is the fourth family of the kings of *Israel*, that was destroyed for their idolatry. The family of *Jeroboam* was first destroyed; next *Baasha's*; afterwards *Abah's*; and last of all, that of *Jebu*: whereas the family of the kings of *Judab*, to whom the promises of God were made, continued to subsist. It was continued in *Jotham*, who imitated *Uzziah* his father in his good qualities, but not in his faults.

C H A P. XVI.

I. **A**HAZ, the eleventh king of *Judab*, a wicked and idolatrous prince, being attacked by the kings of *Syria* and *Israel*, calls in the assistance of *Tiglathpileser*, king of *Affyria*, who took *Damascus*, the capital of *Syria*, and slew the king of *Syria*. II. *Ahaz* causes an altar to be built to the idol of the

Syrians; places this altar in the temple of *Jerusalem*, and establishes idolatrous worship there. He dies in the sixteenth year of his reign, and is succeeded by his son *Hezekiah*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

A *HAZ* was the wickedest king that had ever been till then in the kingdom of *Judah*. He served false gods, and even imitated the custom of idolaters, in making their children pass through the fire in honour of their idols. Instead of humbling himself before God, as the prophet *Isaiab* exhorted him to do, promising that God would deliver him from the kings of *Syria* and *Israel*, he arrived at last to that degree of impiety, as to cause an altar to be made, like that which the *Syrians* had at *Damascus*, and to be put in the temple. The history of this prince shews what those men are capable of who give way to their passions, and to their hard heart. We must likewise observe the behaviour of *Urijah* the priest, who placed the idolatrous altar in the temple at *Jerusalem*, instead of hindring the king from executing so impious a design. Impiety is still more odious in the ministers of religion than in princes; and they become exceeding guilty, when either fear or complaisance for the great men of the world, or any other consideration whatever, engages them to do what is contrary to the law of God.

C H A P. XVII.

I. **T**HE history of the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes, which happened in the reign of *Hoshea*, the last king of *Israel*, and contemporary with *Hezekiah*, the king of *Judah*. *Hoshea* having conspired against the king of *Assyria*, to whom he was tributary; that prince besieged and took *Sa-*
maria,

maria, and carried the *Israelites* captives into *Assyria* and other places. II. Some years after, the king of *Assyria* sending people to inhabit *Samaria*, and the land of *Israel*, it came to pass, that because they did not serve the true God, they were devoured by lions. This obliged the king of *Assyria* to send them an *Israelitish* priest, who might teach them to serve the Lord; but they mixed their own superstitions and the service of their idols with that of the true God; and this was the original of the sect of the *Samaritans*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE event recorded in this chapter, is one of the most remarkable in the old testament; namely, the entire ruin of the kingdom of *Israel*, otherwise called the kingdom of the ten tribes, which was destroyed two hundred and fifty years after its separation from that of *Judah*. The scripture takes particular notice of the cause of this destruction: which was owing not only to *Hoshea's* conspiracy against the king of *Assyria*, but chiefly to the ingratitude and idolatry of the *Israelites*, and their other sins; especially their incorrigible hardness of heart, and repeated contempt of the patience and long-suffering of God, of his word, and of the threats and remonstrances of his prophets. This example should teach all men, that obstinacy in sin, and contempt of God's word, force him, as it were, at last to execute his threatnings; and that the covenant God makes with any people, does not hinder him from rejecting them, and punishing them with the greatest severity, if they continue offending him. We are next to take notice of the wisdom of God in the ruin and dispersion of the *Israelites*. He drove them in this manner out of their country, to shew, that the divine covenant should not be always confined to their nation; and by that means, to spread some rays of his knowledge among the heathens,

thens, and thereby prepare them one day to receive the gospel. God sent lions against the new inhabitants of the land of *Israel*, to make them sensible of his power, and engage them to fear him; and to prevent the knowledge of God from being entirely lost in that country. Lastly, What is here said of the religious worship of the *Samaritans*, who professed to serve God, and at the same time worshipped their images, teaches us, that God will be served with purity, and without any mixture of superstition and hypocrisy: and that, in general, those who profess to worship and fear God, ought to do it sincerely, without dividing their affection between him and the world.

C H A P. XVIII.

THIS chapter contains three things: I. The zeal of *Hezekiah*, the twelfth king of *Judah*, in attempting to abolish idolatry. II. A short account of the ruin of the kingdom of *Israel*. III. *Sennacherib*, king of *Assyria*, makes war against *Hezekiah*, and sends some of the principal officers of his army to *Jerusalem*, to summon him and his subjects to submit to him, and to insult, not only *Hezekiah*, but even God himself.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

AS soon as *Hezekiah* came to the crown, he thought of destroying the idolatry which his father had introduced, and averting the wrath of God which threatened his kingdom. He broke in pieces the brazen serpent, because the people offered incense to it; although that serpent was a most remarkable monument of what had formerly happened in the wilderness, when the fiery serpents destroyed a great number of the children of *Israel*. This action of *Hezekiah*, which is mentioned in scripture with great commendation,

mendation, shews plainly that whatever is an occasion of idolatry, sin, and scandal, ought to be taken quite away ; and that we ought to pay no honour to any image or relick whatever. *Hezekiah's* sincere attachment to the law, and to the worship of God, was very acceptable in his sight. God blessed him with prosperity, and made him victorious over the *Philistines*, and secured him when the king of *Assyria* came to take *Samaria*, and destroy the kingdom of the ten tribes. However, the ruin of the kingdom of *Israel*, which happened in the time of *Hezekiah*, ought to have been a warning to those of the kingdom of *Judah*, to teach them, that if they provoked the Lord by their disobedience, he would destroy them likewise. This truth they had still greater reason to be convinced of, when the same king of *Assyria* made war some years after against *Hezekiah*, and took from him several cities. God exposed this prince to this great danger to try him, to give him marks of his protection, and engage his subjects to trust in him alone. This he did likewise, to make it evidently appear that God protected the kingdom of *Judah*, and that the *Assyrians* could never have subdued the ten tribes, if God had not permitted it so to be. Thus does the Lord dispose all things for the good of men, to the advantage of those that fear him, and to the glory of his name. *Hezekiah*, when he was attacked by the king of *Assyria*, acknowledged he had been guilty of a fault in rebelling against him ; and even sent that prince a great sum of money, which he had exacted of him. *Hezekiah*, in this behaviour, gave proof of his prudence and integrity ; and *Sennacherib* ought to have retired. But this unjust and haughty king still continued the war, which occasioned his own destruction, as we learn in the sequel of this history. Lastly, The insolent and impious behaviour of the ambassadors of *Sennacherib* is to be taken notice

tice of : when they spake of the true God, they compared him to idols, saying, that as the gods of the several nations which *Sennacherib* had conquered, could not deliver their people out of his hand, so neither should the God whom *Hezekiah* worshipped be able to deliver him. The insolent blasphemies of this idolatrous king, which did so much astonish *Hezekiah*, hastened his ruin, and engaged the Lord to destroy him. God is jealous of his glory, and revenges the insults that are offered him ; and therefore, when we meet, even among Christians, with impious wretches, who openly insult the deity, we ought not to lose courage, but rather believe, that God will not fail to rebuke their boldness, and confound those who dare provoke and affront the almighty.

C H A P. XIX.

I. **K**ING *Hezekiah* informs the prophet *Isaiab* of the threats of *Sennacherib*, king of *Assyria*, and lays before the Lord the letters full of blasphemy which he had received from that prince. II. God promises *Hezekiah* to deliver him ; and *Sennacherib*'s army is defeated by an angel, and he, returning into his own country, is murdered by his own sons.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT we have to observe in this chapter is,
I. That good king *Hezekiah*, alarmed with the threats of *Sennacherib*, whose power he could not resist, and grieved with the blasphemies which that idolatrous prince had uttered against God, recommended himself to the prayers of *Isaiab*, carried to the temple the insulting letters, full of impiety, which *Sennacherib* had sent him, and put up to God a prayer expressive of his great zeal, profound humility, and firm trust in him. Good men have always recourse to
God

God in their distress, and put their trust in his assistance ; but they call upon him with extraordinary fervency and confidence, when his glory is concerned in their deliverance. II. God, by the prophet *Isaiab*, assured *Hezekiab* of his assistance ; and that prophet's message from God on this occasion was very remarkable. In it we find, God was particularly provoked by the blasphemies of *Sennacherib*, and the insolent manner in which he had spoken against him ; herein he describes the infinite power of God, and the ease with which he would confound that haughty and impious prince. These promises of the prophet, and the confidence of *Hezekiab*, were not in vain and without effect : God stirred up the *Ethiopians* to come and fight against *Sennacherib*, which obliged him to leave *Judea* ; an angel destroyed all his army in one night ; and at last, this idolatrous prince being returned to his own country, was assassinated by his sons, while he was worshipping his idols. In this memorable example we see, that those who fear God never trust in him in vain ; that his power is infinite ; that he is jealous of his glory ; and that those who provoke him by their impiety and their pride, and particularly proud and wicked princes, shall not escape his vengeance. Lastly, This wonderful deliverance brought *Hezekiab* into great esteem among the neighbouring princes, so that from all parts offerings were made to God in the temple of *Jerusalem*. Thus God makes all things work together for good to those that love him, and to advance the glory of his name.

C H A P. XX.

I. **H***Hezekiab* being sick, *Isaiab* declares to him that he should die ; but God, being moved by his prayers, prolongs his life for fifteen years, and confirms his promise by a miracle. II. The king

of *Babylon*, sending ambassadors to *Jerusalem* with letters and presents, *Hezekiah* shews them his treasures; for which he was reprov'd by the prophet *Isaiab*, who foretels him, that his treasures, and his children too, should be carried into that country. *Hezekiah* dies, having reigned nine and twenty years, and is succeeded by *Manasseh* his son.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

JUST after *Hezekiah* had been attacked by the king of *Affyria*, he was visit'd with a very dangerous illness, and the prophet *Isaiab* was sent from God, to warn him that he should die. This was a fresh trial, which serv'd to manifest and increase *Hezekiah's* faith and piety. For this very end God visits his children with divers sore afflictions. II. *Isaiab's* warning to that king, to set his house in order before his death, shews, that it is agreeable to the will of God, that persons who are like to die should settle their temporal affairs; but the chief care of dying persons should be to secure what relates to their eternal welfare. III. The prayer which *Hezekiah* made upon that occasion, proves how advantageous a thing it is, at the end of life, to have lived in holiness; and with what confidence good men call upon God in time of trouble. IV. In the speedy healing of *Hezekiah*, and the miracle wrought by God in his behalf, we see the efficacy of the prayers of good men, to procure the mercies of God, and revoke his threatnings. This likewise shews, that God keeps in his own hand the lives of all men, and prolongs or shortens them as he pleases. V. The arrival of the ambassadors of the king of *Babylon* at *Jerusalem*, is an evidence that *Hezekiah* was in great reputation among foreign princes. However, the scripture takes notice that he sinned in shewing them his treasures and all his precious things; and to bring him to a sense of his fault, and to humble him

him for it, the prophet told him, all his treasures, and his children too, should be carried away to *Babylon*; which came to pass in the reign of *Manasseh* his son, and the reign of his successors. From whence we may learn, that the good things of the world are vain, and of a short duration; and that they that possess them should never be puffed up by them, nor place their confidence in them.

C H A P. XXI.

- I. **M***anasseh*, the thirteenth king of *Judab*, again introduces idolatry, and gives himself up to work all manner of wickedness. God, provoked by his sins, declares, he would *stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Abab*; that is, that *Jerusalem* and the kingdom of *Judab* should be destroyed, as the kingdom of *Israel*, and *Samaria*, the capital of that kingdom, had been not long before; and that God would punish *Manasseh*, as he had done impious *Abab*, king of *Israel*.
- II. After the death of *Manasseh*, *Amon*, his son, followed the steps of his father, and was killed when he had reigned but two years, and was succeeded by *Josiab*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are two remarks to be made on what is recorded in this chapter concerning the reign of *Manasseh*. I. That instead of walking in the steps of *Hezekiah* his father, he fell into all manner of abominations, and exceeded in wickedness all the wicked kings of *Judab* that had been before him. II. That the Lord then declared, the utter ruin of *Jerusalem* and the kingdom of *Judab* was determined and irreversible. Here let us consider, that children do not always inherit the piety of their parents; that those who in their youth cast off the fear of God, and have
the

the means of gratifying their passions, are capable of proceeding to the greatest height of impiety; and that wicked princes expose their states to the utmost miseries. Further, the threatnings which God denounced against *Manasseh* were put in execution; he was carried away into *Babylon*, and put in chains; but having humbled himself, God brought him again to *Jerusalem*, as is mentioned in the book of *Chronicles*; and after a few years *Jerusalem* was utterly destroyed. *Amon*, the son of *Manasseh*, imitated his father in his idolatry, but not in his repentance; and received the punishment he deserved, being slain in a conspiracy.

C H A P. XXII.

I. **J**OSIAH, the fifteenth king of *Judab*, a prince of great piety, when he was very young, undertakes to restore the service of God, and to repair the temple. II. As they were labouring in this good work, they found in the temple the book of the law of *Moses*; and *Josiah*, having heard it read, sent to consult *Huldah* the prophetess: who sent him word, that the threatnings contained in that book were going to be executed upon the *Jews*; but that God would remove him before that destruction came upon them.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE history of king *Josiah*, who with so much care banished out of *Jerusalem* and every part of his kingdom all the abominations which prevailed therein, that he might avert the wrath of God, which he found was ready to fall upon his subjects, should serve for an instruction and example to christian princes, and excite them to banish from their dominions all impiety and irreligion, and neglect nothing which may tend to promote that great end. *Josiah* was very sensibly affected with fear and dread at the hearing

ing of the threatenings contained in the Books of *Isaiah*; and sent to *Huldah* the prophetess, to know what he was to do in so dangerous a conjuncture. Those who fear God tremble at his word, and endeavour to find out the means of appeasing his wrath, when they see it kindled. But the answer of the prophetess deserves to be particularly attended to. She sent the king word, that the iniquities of the *Jews* were come to such a height, that the divine threatenings would soon be put in execution; but that before they were, God would remove him. This affords us these two lessons: one is, that when the wickedness of men is past remedy, neither the endeavours, nor the prayers of the righteous, can prevent the judgments of God from taking their course; the other is, that death is not always a mark of God's displeasure; and that he sometimes shortens the lives of those he most loves, that they may not be involved in the judgments he intends to pour upon the heads of the wicked.

C H A P. XXIII.

I. KING *Josiah* assembles the people to hear the book of the law read, and to renew their covenant with God; he removes idolatry out of the temple, and out of all the land of *Judah*; demolishes the altar that *Jeroboam* had built at *Bethel*; and causes the bones of dead bodies to be burnt upon it, to signify, that that place was defiled and abominable; and puts the idolatrous priests to death, as God had commanded in the law. He causes the passover to be celebrated with great solemnity, and applies himself with much zeal to root out idolatry and superstition, and to observe all that the Lord had commanded. He *Josiah*, going to fight against the king of *Egypt*, is slain, and is succeeded by his son *Jeboabaz*, who was the sixteenth king of *Judah*, and revived

idolatry; but he reigned but three months, being deposed by the king of *Egypt*, who set up his brother *Eliakim*, otherwise *Jehoiakim*, in his room; he also was given to idolatry, and reigned eleven years.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

GOD having informed *Josiah*, by *Huldah* the prophetess, that the curses contained in the law of *Moses* were going to fall upon the *Jews*, he gathered all the people together to hear the law read; renewed the covenant with God in the most solemn manner in the temple; promised to observe that covenant, and keep the commandments of the Lord; which promise he likewise obliged all the people to make. After this, we see with what surprising zeal and application he laboured to abolish idolatry, uncleanness and debauchery, and to re-establish religion, not only in his own kingdom, but in the country of the ten tribes. Thus do men of piety, and particularly good princes, instruct themselves in the law of God, and employ all their power to put a stop to wickedness and impiety, to promote the fear of God, and secure the observance of his holy laws. The piety of *Josiah* is the more praise-worthy, as God had told him the destruction of the kingdom of *Judah* was determined, and that he himself should shortly die; and yet he did not abate in his zeal; but still called upon the people to return to the true service of God, and employed the remainder of his days in acts of piety and religion. A good man, whatever circumstances he is placed in, and whatever the event of things may be, takes care to be always engaged in his duty, and dedicates his whole life, and all the powers which God has given him, to promote the glory of God and the public good. It appears likewise, from the particular account we have in this chapter of all that *Josiah* did at *Jerusalem*, and through all the land, to
destroy

destroy idolatry, and remove every thing that was scandalous and sinful, that all manner of abominations, and the most horrid and execrable crimes, were introduced there under the preceeding reigns, and openly practised; and therefore we must not be surprised at God's destroying that city. *Josiah's* demolishing and profaning the altar of *Bethel*, sacrificing thereon the idolatrous priests, as commanded in the law of God, and burning the bones of dead men upon it, deserves to be particularly considered; because it was the completion of a prediction that had been made above three hundred years before, by the prophet that came to *Bethel*, when king *Jeroboam* established there his false worship; who openly declared, that a king named *Josiah* should destroy that altar, sacrifice the priests of the high places, and burn upon it the bones of dead men. It is even remarked, that the sepulchre of that prophet remained to that day, and that *Josiah* commanded them to use it with respect, which was a monument of this prediction. This event is very remarkable, and strongly proves the truth of the word of God, and the certainty of his threatnings. *Josiah* gave likewise a signal proof of his zeal in that solemn passover which he celebrated; and the scripture gives a most extraordinary and glorious character of this prince, when it says of him, *That there was not any king, either before or after him, who turned to God with all his heart, like him.* However, we are told, that notwithstanding the piety and care of this king, *the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of the sins with which Manasseh had provoked him.* The piety of good men is never without effect with respect to themselves, but they cannot always turn away the wrath of God from a guilty people; and there are some sins whose effects and consequences remain a long time, though

God has pardoned those who committed them. *Yosiah*, was the last good king of *Judab*. Though his successors had before them the good example which he had left them, and had evident proofs of God's wrath, yet they provoked him more with their idolatrous worship; so that the neighbouring kings made war upon them, carried them away captive, imprisoned them, and made them tributary; till at last the kingdom of *Judab* was entirely destroyed.

C H A P. XXIV.

I. **T**HE king of *Babylon* comes against *Jeboiakim*, the eighteenth king of *Judab*, with an army of *Syrians*, *Moabites* and *Ammonites*; binds him with chains of brass, to carry him away captive to *Babylon* with part of the people, and the sacred vessels of the temple, which he carried thither, as is recorded in the thirty sixth chapter of the second book of *Chronicles*. However, he returned to *Jerusalem*, and some years after was put to death, and denied a burial, as we read in the book of *Jeremiah*; where we are informed of several remarkable particulars of the reigns of *Jeboiakim*, *Jechoniah* and *Zedekiah*. *Jeboiachin* his son, otherwise called *Jechoniah*, succeeded him, and was an idolator, as his father had been. In his reign, which was but three months and ten days, the king of *Babylon* came again to *Jerusalem*, and carried him away, with a great number of persons, and great spoils; and made *Zedekiah*, the uncle of *Jeboiachin*, king, who was the nineteenth, and last king of *Judab*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT we are to collect from the reading this chapter is; that after the death of good king *Josiah*, every thing grew worse and worse in the kingdom

kingdom of *Judab*. His successors were very wicked; and God then began to put his threatnings in execution, suffering them to be invaded by the king of *Babylon*, who made war against them, and carried away a great number of people into captivity, and the holy vessels out of the temple. The scripture expressly declares, that all these things happened by the command of God, and because of the sins of the *Jews*, and in particular, the sins of *Manasseh*; and that God would not pardon them. These were so many signs, presaging the total destruction of that people, which came to pass a few years after; and they had reason to perceive in all these events, that God began to withdraw his protection from them, and was going to forsake them. God is very merciful and long-suffering towards those who offend him, and withdraws his favour and protection from them by degrees; but after they have long resisted all God's gracious methods to recover them from their sins and bring them to their duty, he utterly rejects them, as we read in the following chapter it happened at last to the *Jews*. From this carrying away of the *Jews* into captivity in the reign of *Jeboiachin*, we are to compute the seventy years of the *Babylonish* captivity.

C H A P. XXV.

ZEDEKIAH, the nineteenth and last king of *Judab*, falling into idolatry, as his predecessors had done, and breaking the oath of allegiance he had taken to the king of *Babylon*, God at length destroyed the kingdom of *Judab*. *Nebuchadnezzar* besieged *Jerusalem*, took it, and plundered it, and burnt that and the temple. *Zedekiah* was carried to *Babylon* in chains, after they had put out his eyes; and the people also were carried into captivity, except

a few *Jews*, who remained in the land to till the ground, under the conduct of *Gedaliab*. Some years after, the king of *Babylon* used *Jeboiachin* kindly, who had been long there in captivity.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have in this last chapter one of the most memorable histories in the holy scripture. Here we learn, that God delivered *Jerusalem* to the *Babylonians*, and that all the *Jews* perished miserably by the famine, or by the sword, except those that were carried into captivity, and a few that remained in *Judea*. Thus the threatnings, which God had so often denounced against them, were at last accomplished; which is a great example of the judgments of God upon those who abuse his patience and mercy, and obstinately persist in their sins. The most remarkable circumstance of all these events is, that the temple itself was involved in this destruction; and that God suffered the *Babylonians* to profane and burn that house, which was dedicated to him, after they had carried away the most precious things in it. God was pleased in that manner to punish the *Jews*, who had profaned the temple and his service; and to shew, at the same time, that the legal service which was established there was not to subsist always; and that the worship which was then abolished for a time, should be so for ever at the coming of the Messiah, by the last destruction of *Jerusalem* and the temple; and by the dispersion of the *Jews*. We are to observe, that king *Zedekiah* was carried to *Babylon* bound in chains, after that his sons were murdered in his presence, and his own eyes put out, to punish him for his rebellion and perjury. This was a terrible; but just judgment of God upon that king; since it was he who by his crimes, by his perjury, by his rebellion against the king of *Babylon*, and by his obstinacy,

obstinacy, notwithstanding all that *Jeremiah* had said to him, was the cause of the destruction of *Jerusalem*. The condition of the *Jews* who remained in *Judea* was most deplorable, all the time the captivity lasted; however, God preserved them there, as we find in the thirty seventh and thirty eighth chapters of *Jeremiah*. Lastly, It is said that *Jeboiachin*, otherwise named *Jechoniah*, who had been a long time captive at *Babylon*, was set at large and treated kindly by *Evilmerodach* king of *Babylon*. God so ordered it, that the *Jews* who were in captivity, and *Jeboiachin* their king, should there meet with some kindness and favour, to prepare the way to their restoration when the seventy years were expired; and that king *David's* family, of which the *Messiah* was to come, might subsist.

The end of the second book of KINGS.



T H E
F I R S T B O O K
O F
C H R O N I C L E S.

A R G U M E N T.

The books of Chronicles, are records of what passed under the reigns of David and Solomon, and the kings of Judah in particular: among which are interspersed some circumstances relating to the kings of Israel. The first book of Chronicles contains several genealogies from Adam to the time of the Babylonish captivity: This is the subject of the first nine chapters. In the rest of the book we have the history of David's reign, beginning at the death of Saul.

C H A P. I.

THE genealogy of the patriarchs, from Adam to Abraham; the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham; and the posterity of Esau, the son of Isaac.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE genealogies, in this and the following chapter, are not without their use. They settle the antiquity as well as the truth of sacred history,
since

since they trace things from the beginning of the world, and from *Adam* the first man. They prove, that from the most early times, and afterwards, the *Jews* preserved among them the knowledge of what had passed from the creation. They serve to clear up many points in sacred history, and shew the origin of the several people and nations of the world. It appears in particular, from what is recorded in this chapter, that the posterity of *Abraham* was, for a long time, of great power and renown; since there were among the descendants of *Ishmael* and *Esau*, a great number of kings and princes; according to the promises before made by God to *Abraham*.

C H A P. II.

THE genealogy of the descendants of *Judah*, one of the twelve sons of *Jacob*, and that of *Caleb*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE genealogy of *Judah's* descendants is set down first, because the tribe of *Judah* held the chief rank among the tribes. We see by this, and the two following chapters, that this tribe was very numerous and powerful, as the patriarch *Jacob* had foretold, when he blessed his sons before his death.

C H A P. III.

THE descendants of king *David*, before and after the captivity of *Babylon*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

AS the family of king *David* was the most considerable of any of the tribe of *Judah*, the genealogy of his descendants was preserved with great exactness.

exactness. This God thought expedient, because the Messiah was to be born of the posterity of *David*; which was fulfilled in the person of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; as we read in the beginning of *St Matthew's* gospel. The list we here read of *David's* descendants, proves that the *Jews* did not lose their genealogies in the time of the *Babylonish* captivity; and that these books of *Chronicles* were wrote after that captivity.

C H A P. IV.

A Continuation of *Judab's* descendants, and an account of *Simeon's* posterity.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

ALL that is particularly remarkable in this chapter, is what is said of *Jabez*, who was honoured and respected in his time, and by his prayers obtained of God the privilege of living in peace, and without affliction. There have been at all times persons valuable for their faith and piety, and who have considered the divine favour as the source of all their happiness: and in all ages God has answered their prayers, and poured his benefits upon them.

C H A P. V.

THE genealogies of *Reuben* and *Gad*, and the half tribe of *Manasseb*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE tribes of *Reuben* and *Gad*, and the half tribe of *Manasseb*, had their portion on the other side *Jordan*, in the time of *Moses*. After that they grew great and made several conquests, by the assistance of the almighty, whose aid they invoked in their engagements with their enemies, and in whose help they trusted. But we find in this chapter, that these

these same tribes, falling into idolatry, and forsaking God, were given into the hand of the kings of *Assyria*, who carried them captive out of their own country. Those who have received the greatest favours from God, and make an ill use of them, become the objects of his vengeance.

C H A P. VI.

THIS chapter contains, I. The genealogy of *Levi* and his three sons, *Gershom*, *Kobath*, and *Merari*; and the succession of high priests, from *Aaron* to the time of the captivity in *Babylon*. II. Particular mention of the cities which had been assigned in the ten tribes of *Israel* for the Levites to dwell in.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE genealogy of the Levites was preserved with extraordinary care, because they were the ministers of religion, and each family of that tribe had its peculiar functions in the divine service. From this chapter we may collect, that the Levites exercised these functions both in the tabernacle which *Moses* built, and in the temple of *Solomon* at *Jerusalem*; till the temple was destroyed, and the people carried captive to *Babylon*. After their return from the captivity, the priests and Levites resumed their functions; but the antient order was restored in a very imperfect manner.

C H A P. VII.

THE descendants of *Issachar*, *Benjamin*, *Naphtali*, *Manasseh*, *Ephraim* and *Asher*.

C H A P. VIII.

TH E names of the descendants of *Benjamin*, and in particular of the ancestors and posterity of *Saul*, who was the first king of *Israel*.

C H A P. IX.

TH IS chapter contains, I. The names of those of the tribe of *Judab*, *Benjamin*, *Ephraim*, and *Manasseb*, who dwelt at *Jerusalem* after the *Babylonish* captivity. II. The names of the priests and Levites, and the several offices in which they were employed. III. A repetition of the genealogy of king *Saul*.

R E F L E C T I O N S *on chapters vii, viii and ix.*

AF T E R what has been said on the genealogies contained in the preceeding chapter, there is nothing particular to be observed on the seventh and eight chapters. In the ninth chapter we see, that as soon as the captivity of *Babylon* was at end, and the *Jews* were permitted to return to their own country, there were many who came and dwelt at *Jerusalem*, and signalized their zeal in endeavouring to restore the divine worship, as much as their condition would admit, to the order prescribed in the law; and according to the regulations made by king *David* and by *Samuel* the prophet.

C H A P. X.

I. **T**H IS chapter contains an account of the *Israelites* being defeated by the *Philistines*, and of the death of *Saul* and his three sons, who were slain in the battle. II. The *Philistines* ignominiously exposed the bodies of *Saul* and his sons; but the men
of

of *Jabesh* buried them honourably. After *Saul's* death, the kingdom was given to *David*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE victory which the *Philistines* gained over the children of *Israel*, must be considered as God's just judgment on that people, who had in many instances offended him, and particularly on king *Saul*. The sacred history expressly declares, that *Saul* died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, because he kept not the word of the Lord, and even asked counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, and enquired not of the Lord. This prince had committed many sins, but this was the greatest of all, and what hastened his ruin. Thus sinners when they have once forsaken God, stray farther and farther from him, and at length fill up the measure of their iniquities. From hence we are particularly to collect, that one of the greatest sins we can be guilty of before God is to consult conjurers, and give credit to those who practise that unlawful art.

C H A P. XI.

I. **D**AVID is acknowledged king by all the tribes of *Israel*. **II.** He takes from the *Jebusites* the city *Jebus*, afterwards called *Jerusalem*. **III.** We here find the names of the most valiant men in the service of king *David*, with an account of their most remarkable actions.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT we are to take notice of in this chapter is, **I.** That *David*, after the various afflictions and trials he met with, both from *Saul* his predecessor, and from those who held with *Ish-bosheth*, the son of *Saul*, was at last made king over all the tribe.

tribes of *Israel*, who submitted to him as to the prince that God had chosen to reign over them. Thus the promises of God never fail of being executed; and the trials which those who fear him are exposed to have always a happy issue. II. The taking the city *Jebus*, which is *Jerusalem*, is here set down, because this was one of the most considerable events in *David's* reign; that city being afterwards the capital of the kingdom, and the seat of religious worship. III. Those mighty and valiant men which were in *David's* service, must be considered as a mark of the divine favour towards that prince. IV. The action of the three officers, who went to draw water at *Bethlehem*, was a proof of their great courage, as well as of their affection to their king, since what they did was at the hazard of their lives. *David*, however, refused to drink the water; which shewed he was not pleased they had exposed themselves for him to so great danger, without necessity. But his pouring out the water in honour of the deity, and as an act of thanksgiving, was a greater glory to those three men than if he had drank it, and a much stronger expression of the value he set on their courage and affection towards him. We should never either rashly expose ourselves to danger, or suffer others to do it without necessity, for our interest or gratification.

C H A P. XII.

THE names of those who joined *David*, when he was at *Ziklag*, towards the end of *Saul's* reign; with a list of those who came to him some time after to *Hebron* to make him king.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are two reflections to be made on this chapter: I. We here see the care providence took of *David*, since while he was at *Ziklag* a great number of valiant men, even of *Saul's* relations, joined him, and so enlarged the army that he was not only in a condition to pursue the *Amalekites*, who had burnt *Ziklag*, but also to secure the kingdom after *Saul's* death. II. We here observe that the *Israelites*, as God had promised *David*, submitted to him, and owned him for their king: whence it appears, that God has all events at his disposal; that the hearts of men are in the hand of the Lord, and that he so disposes all things as to bring about his designs, and make them work together for the good of those he loves, and who trust in him.

C H A P. XIII.

I. **D** A V I D gathers all *Israel* together, and proposes to remove the ark of the covenant from *Kirjathjearim*, where it had been for some time, to the city of *Jerusalem*; which all the people approving of, the ark was put into a cart drawn by oxen. **H.** But *David* fearing to have the ark brought to *Jerusalem*, because God had smitten *Uzza* for touching it, had it put in the house of *Obed-edom*, where it remained three months.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are three things to be considered on this chapter; I. That as soon as *David* was made king over all the tribes of *Israel*, he desired to have the ark of the covenant brought to *Jerusalem*; esteeming it his greatest happiness to have near him that valuable pledge of the divine presence and protection.

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This was a noble example of faith and piety for all conditions of men, and especially for princes and great men. II. As to the death of *Uzza*, we must not imagine that when he held out his hand to lay hold of the ark, which was in danger of falling, he did it with an evil intention; on the contrary, it seems as if his whole design was to prevent the ark from falling, and being overturned. God therefore smote *Uzza* so that he died, not so much to punish him, as for an example, to inspire *David* and all the people with dread, and convince them they had been guilty of a great fault, in having the ark of the covenant drawn by oxen on a cart, instead of having it carried by the Levites, as the law expressly commanded. Lastly, It is said, that God blessed the house of *Obed-edom*, and all that he had, while the ark remained at his house. After what had befallen *Uzza*, *David* perhaps would have been afraid to have the ark brought to *Jerusalem*; but the blessing which attended the house of *Obed-edom*, on account of the presence of the ark, encouraged *David* to put his design in execution. Let this teach us that the divine presence and favour is the source of all the blessings we can enjoy.

C H A P. XIV.

DAVID receives ambassadors and presents from the king of *Tyre*; has several children born; and gains two victories over the *Philistines*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE embassy and the presents which the king of *Tyre* sent to *Jerusalem*, shew how greatly the neighbouring princes esteemed and regarded king *David*. By this too, *David* might perceive, as in this chapter we are told he did, that God blessed him, and that his kingdom was confirmed. II. It is here said,

said that *David* took several wives; on which it must be remarked, that this was a bad custom which at that time prevailed among the *Jews*, contrary to the divine will, and the first institution of marriage; and that the great number of children which *David* had by different mothers occasioned, as from the sequel of his history it plainly appears, very great misfortunes in his family. This shows that the laws of *Jesus Christ*, which reform all these disorders, and restore marriage to its primitive state, were highly necessary, and are strictly just, and most conducive to the good and happiness of society. III. As to *David's* two victories over the *Philistines*, who were the greatest enemies of *Israel*, the sacred history remarks, that they were obtained by the divine assistance, after the king had consulted the Lord; and that accordingly he gave God all the glory, acknowledging that it was the Lord who had destroyed those idolators, and burned their idols. Whatever we undertake under the guidance and direction of the supreme being, has always a happy issue; and what produces the greatest joy in good men, when they see their success, is to consider it as a mark of the love of God towards them, and make it a means of promoting his glory.

CHAP. XV.

DAVID, by the ministry of the Levites, removes the ark of the covenant, with very great solemnity, from the house of *Obed-edom* to *Jerusalem*, and places it in the tabernacle, which he made ready for it.

REFLECTION'S.

IT is to be observed, I. That when *David* was determined to bring the ark to *Jerusalem*, he took care to have it carried by the Levites, according to

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the command given by *Moses*; and perceived, that his not observing that order three months before was the reason God had slain *Uzzab*. This shews why *Uzzab* died upon touching the ark; and proves with how great exactness we should conform to all God's commands. II. *David*, the Levites, the elders, and all the people, expressed the greatest joy at the bringing up of the ark, praising God with songs, and offering sacrifices; *David*, in particular, distinguished himself by his zeal on this occasion. The king's extraordinary joy, proceeded from a firm persuasion that the divine presence, of which the ark was the express symbol, would for ever after be all his happiness. This example of faith and piety is worthy the imitation of men of all ranks, but especially of those in an exalted station. III. *Michal*, *David's* wife, seeing him dance before the ark, despised him for it in her heart, imagining what he did was indecent, and unworthy such a prince as he. Hence it appears, she had but a small share of zeal and piety; and thus do the profane men of the world often condemn and despise actions really commendable, and acceptable in the sight of God.

C H A P. XVI.

D *AVID*, having brought the ark to *Jerusalem*, in the manner related in the foregoing chapter, places it in the tabernacle which he had set up for that purpose. He appoints Levites to minister before the ark, and to praise the Lord; and to this end gives them the hymns which are here set down.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

K I N G *David*, after he had removed the ark with great pomp, concluded the solemnity with hymns, which he had ordered to be sung in honour of

of the Lord. The zeal of this godly prince should excite ours; and it is but right that the great men of the earth, and in general all those to whom God has granted prosperity, and the means of promoting his glory, should honour and glorify him to the utmost of their abilities. The sacred hymns, which were sung by the Levites, and by the people, should likewise serve for the matter of our praises, who have still more reason to adore the divine majesty, to speak of all his wondrous works, and to rejoice before him, than the *Israelites* had; and even those exhortations, which are here addressed to all people, to praise God, and rejoice in the coming of his kingdom, properly relate to the times of the gospel. Christians are under the strictest obligation to excite each other to this duty, and say, *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for ever and ever; and let all the people say, Amen.*

C H A P. XVII.

I. **K**ING *David* communicates to the prophet *Nathan* his design to build a temple in *Jerusalem*; but the prophet gave him to understand, in consequence of a revelation he had received, that the Lord would not have him build the temple, but would give him a son who should put his design in execution. II. *David*, full of gratitude for the mercies of God towards his family, returns thanks with great zeal, and beseeches him to fulfil his promises, and to bless his house, and his posterity.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **D**AVID was not satisfied with having the ark brought to *Jerusalem*, but was desirous likewise to place it in a temple, which he proposed to build. This is a fresh argument of this prince's piety,

ety, and proves, that in the happy and glorious state he was then in, he had the glory of God more at heart than any thing that concerned his own private interest. Such is the spirit which ought to animate all those who have received any particular advantages from God, and have it in their power to do something to promote his glory. II. Though *David's* intention was good and commendable, God did not think fit he should put it in execution, because as it is elsewhere observed, that king had been, and was still to be engaged in several wars; and the prosperity and peaceable reign of his son *Solomon* would be better suited to the execution of such a design. God does not always approve of our putting in execution designs, which are in themselves good, at the very time we could wish; but makes them succeed in a more suitable and convenient manner. Therefore we ought always to leave the success of our schemes to providence; not doubting but he, who has respect unto the heart, will accept them, when formed with a good intention. III. *Nathan's* promise, that *David* should have a son, that God should be his father, and that his throne should be established for ever, may refer to *Solomon*, the son of *David*; but *St Paul's* application of this promise to our Lord, shews that it is fully and truly completed in none but *Jesus Christ*; who, as he was of the seed of *David*, according to the flesh, so is he the son of God, and his kingdom shall endure to all eternity. Lastly, In *David's* prayers and thanksgivings to God, after *Nathan* had spoke to him, we take notice of that prince's lively sense of gratitude to God, his profound humility, his perfect confidence in the promises of God, and an ardent desire to obtain for himself, and for his posterity, the continuance of the divine favour and protection. This prayer furnishes us with a very extraordinary pattern of that gratitude, faith, piety, and humility,

mility, with which we ought to thank God for all his mercies, and beseech him to continue his favours.

C H A P. XVIII.

THIS chapter contains an account of several victories which *David* gained over the *Philistines*, *Moabites*, *Syrians* and *Edomites*; of the presents sent him by the king of *Hamath*; which *David* dedicated to God, with the gold and silver he had taken from the several people he had conquered. Towards the end of this chapter, we read the names of those who enjoyed the chief posts in the time of *David*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE victories here recorded, shew that God continued his favours to king *David*. He became formidable to his enemies, was loved and respected by the neighbouring kings, and his glory continually increased; and the foundation of all these advantages was, as the sacred historian remarks, God's preserving him whithersoever he went. The king on his part acknowledged himself accountable to the divine assistance for all these victories, and expressed his acknowledgment, by dedicating to him the spoils taken from the several people he had conquered. Thus did God bless *David*, while he remained faithful; but by the sequel of this history it will appear, that he did not experience the same protection when he provoked him by his sins. From which we may learn, that all our happiness depends upon the favour and love of God; and that the way to partake of it is to adhere to him; and employ to his glory all the temporal or spiritual blessings he vouchsafes us.

C H A P. XIX.

HANUN, the king of the *Ammonites*, by insulting the ambassadors which *David* had sent to him, occasioned a war, in which *David* twice defeated the *Syrians* and the *Ammonites*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT we are to take notice of in this chapter is, that king *David* sent ambassadors to the king of the *Ammonites* in a friendly way; but that he, listening to the evil suggestions of his courtiers, took them for spies, and treating them in a most ignominious manner, sent them back again. On this event we may consider, I. That sincere and virtuous persons seek peace, and behave in a friendly manner to every one; but that what they do to promote friendship, is not always well received. II. That men void of virtue, judge of other mens sentiments by their own, and ascribe to them views and designs, which they themselves should have in the same circumstances. III. That distrust and false policy often lead men into very bad measures; and that it is a dangerous thing for princes, and in short, for any persons whatever, to give ear to, and follow evil counsels. As to *David's* war with the *Ammonites*, it was very just, since their king had treated with great indignity the ambassadors *David* had sent as a mark of his friendship; and besides this, the *Ammonites* first declared war against *David*. The success of the war, in which *David* defeated the *Ammonites*, and the *Syrians* who had joined them, shews, that God favours men of uprightness and integrity, and in particular, that he assists princes who are lovers of justice, and friends of peace; that on the contrary, unjust and
haughty.

haughty men expose themselves to the greatest misfortunes by their pride and haughtiness

C H A P. XX.

I. **K**ING *David* takes *Rabbah* from the children of *Ammon*, and defeats them. II. He likewise gains the victory over the *Philistines* in three different battles.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

BESIDES the reflections already made on the victories *David* gained over his enemies, by the assistance of the almighty, there is a particular reflection to be made on the manner, in which we are told in this and in the twelfth chapter of the second book of *Samuel*, *David* treated the *Ammonites*, putting them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and making them pass through the brick-kiln. Suppose these words to denote such punishments as these, we must conceive he would not have exercised a revenge so cruel upon this people, if he had not been in a manner forced to it by some particular reasons, which the sacred history has not mentioned. Besides the king did not treat in this manner all the *Ammonites* without distinction; for they were not utterly destroyed; but only those who were most criminal. However this be, this action of *David* by no means authorises cruelty and barbarity, especially among Christians, who are in the gospel expressly commanded to be meek and gentle towards all men.

C H A P. XXI.

DAVID having sinned in numbering his subjects, God sends the prophet *Gad*, to let him know, that he must choose his punishment in one of

these three scourges, the famine, the sword, or pestilence. The king chose the last, with which seventy thousand of his subjects died; but he appeased the wrath of God by his profound humiliation, and by a sacrifice which he offered, by God's command, in the place which *Gad* appointed.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

ON this history we must remark, I. That though the numbering of the people was a thing in itself not unlawful, yet *David* sinned in doing it, - because he did it without necessity, and not in the manner God had appointed; and doubtless too, from a principle of vainglory, or some other motives not set down in this history, but well known to his officers; as appears from *Joab's* concluding, that God would be offended at this numbering of the people. We sin, not only when we do things in themselves bad and prohibited; we may likewise sin in things lawful and permitted, when we do them with any ill design, or otherwise than God commands or permits. II. God, to punish *David* for boasting in the multitude of his subjects, resolved to lessen the number of them, by war, famine or pestilence, as God usually does punish men in the way they offend him. He would have *David* make choice of one of these three judgments, that he might be the better sensible of his fault, and it might the more evidently appear he himself had occasioned this calamity to the nation. His view was likewise, by this method, to try whether he would trust to his own forces and to human means; or whether he would intirely resign himself to the will of God. But *David* gave proof of his resignation and his confidence in God's mercy, in choosing the pestilence; as this was a punishment which proceeded more immediately from God, and which men can least guard against, and which might have fallen

fallen upon *David* and his family, as well as upon the people. III. *David* beholding the ravage which the pestilence made, and seeing the angel of the Lord with the sword drawn in his hand, gave proofs of the most sincere grief and profound humiliation, acknowledging before all in the most public manner, that he had been the offender, and beseeching the Lord to take vengeance on him and his house, rather than on his subjects. These are noble sentiments of repentance, especially in a prince; and shew how sincerely he was affected with a sense of his guilt, and what a tender affection he bore towards his people. Thus too should we acknowledge our sins, and even make public confession of them, when they are known, and have produced any evil, and given occasion of offence. Lastly, God, moved by king *David's* prayers and humiliation, directed him what to do to put a stop to the pestilence; and he, in obedience to the divine direction, offered a sacrifice in the place which the angel of the Lord had appointed, and so the plague ceased. God, who chastens men for sin, teaches them at the same time how they may recover his favour, and is appeased towards them as soon as they make use of those appointed means of reconciliation, and he sees they are truly humbled.

C H A P. XXII.

I. **T**HE place where *David* had offered a sacrifice, to put an end to the plague which raged in the kingdom, having been marked out by God for the place to build the temple in, *David* makes necessary preparations for the work, and gets together the workmen and the materials for the building. II. He charges his son *Solomon* to labour in the work, and to fear God; and exhorts the chief of the people to assist his son in that great design.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

KING *David* gave noble proofs of his piety towards the end of his reign. For not content with serving God by calling upon him, and giving thanks for his mercies in his own life, he was desirous they should build a temple to his honour; and consecrated all the riches and materials he could get together, for the execution of his pious design. But *David's* zeal and religion is discovered particularly in his exhortations to his son *Solomon*, charging him to fear God, to keep his commandments, and to govern his people righteously; assuring him that this would be the foundation of all his happiness. All Christians, and in particular those who are in authority, or who have riches, ought to have at heart the support of religion and the service of God. Parents especially, should recommend to their children piety, and the keeping God's commandments, as the whole happiness of their families. There is a particular reflection to be made on God's not approving of *David's* building the temple at *Jerusalem*, because he had been a man of war, and had shed much blood, and therefore God was pleased this design should be rather executed by his son *Solomon*. From whence we may conclude that God, who is a God of peace, does not delight in blood; that even just and necessary wars are a great evil; and that by peace and tranquillity, rather than by confusion and trouble, his kingdom is promoted and advanced.

C H A P. XXIII.

DAVID assembles the priests and Levites; numbers the Levites, and assigns them their several functions.

R E F L E C T

R E F L E C T I O N S.

DAVID having numbered the Levites, they were found to be thirty eight thousand; of which four and twenty thousand were employed in the temple; six thousand were judges and officers; four thousand were porters; and four thousand were singers. Till that time, the office of the Levites had been to carry the tabernacle, and the vessels, and the sacred utensils, when the tabernacle was taken to pieces, and carried from one place to another. But as this office was going to cease, when the temple was to be built, other functions were assigned them; and the greatest part of them were appointed to serve under the vessels in the temple; however, they did not have all at once, but in their turn. What *David* did on this occasion, shows the wisdom of this prince and his zeal in the service of God.

C H A P. XXIV.

THIS chapter contains a list of the priests, who descended from *Aaron*, by his two sons, *Elazar* and *Ithamar*. They were divided into four and twenty classes, to serve in their order. Afterwards, the families of the Levites were in like manner divided into four and twenty classes, to be joined to the priests in the service of the temple.

C H A P. XXV.

THIS chapter treats of the singers, in number two hundred and eighty eight, who praised God in the temple with singing, and with sacred instruments of music. These likewise were distributed into four and twenty classes, twelve in each class; so that there were always twelve singers officiating.

C H A P. XXVI.

THE divisions and offices of those Levites who were porters and keepers of the temple. These served by turns, as the others did; and were placed at the four avenues of the temple. A part of these Levites were keepers of the sacred treasures; others were appointed for religious and civil affairs.

REFLECTIONS on chap. xxiv, xxv and xxvi.

THE general reflection on these chapters, is, that *David* in his great zeal settled every thing relating to religion and the service of God, in a beautiful order; that so every thing might be performed in a proper manner, and agreeable to the divine will. However, this prince did not regulate all these things by his own authority; but herein followed the directions God gave by the prophets *Gad*, *Nathan* and *Samuel*.

C H A P. XXVII.

THIS chapter contains the number and the courses of the military and civil officers.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IT appears from this chapter, that king *David* had in his service two hundred fourscore and eight thousand men; who were divided into twelve regiments of twenty four thousand men, and who served each in their month. By this means, the service was a burden to none; since after they had attended their month, the officers and the soldiers were at liberty for eleven months to take care of their domestick affairs. We have likewise in this chapter the
names

names and posts of the heads of the twelve tribes, and the principal officers of the king's household. There was one set over the king's treasures in the city; another appointed for the storehouses in the country; another had the inspection of those that tilled the ground; others were for the vineyards and for the wine; another for the fig-trees and olive-trees. There was one set over the cattle in the mountains; and another in the vallies; another had the inspection of the camels and she-afles; another had* the direction of the small cattle; and lastly, there was a governor over the king's sons. Thus *David*, as a wise and prudent prince, and a father of his country, provided for the security and defence of his dominions, without burdening his subjects.

C H A P. XXVIII.

I. **D**AVID informs the heads of the people of the design he had formed to build a temple, and how God had let him know that *Solomon* his son should build it. II. He exhorts them, as well as *Solomon*, to set about this work, and gives *Solomon* a plan of the temple, with a great quantity of gold, silver and materials, which he had got together for this purpose.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE still see *David's* great zeal for the service of God, the care he took before his death, to give both the rulers of the kingdom, and *Solomon* his son, necessary instructions for the building of the temple; and how he provided gold, silver, materials, and every thing he could get together for the execution of this pious design. Let us all be animated with the same zeal, and contribute, accord-
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ing to our station and abilities, to the promoting and establishing God's worship and service; and if the nature of that worship which the gospel teaches us to pay to God does not require such great expence, we may employ our substance in works of piety, still more acceptable in the sight of God; in procuring the edification and instruction of our neighbour, in relieving those that are in necessity, and labouring by all possible means, and especially by our examples, to promote and advance the kingdom of *Jesus Christ*. *David's* exhortations to the chief men of the kingdom, and to *Solomon* his son, charging them above all things to serve God with integrity and uprightness of heart, and to keep his commandments, deserve to be well considered. The first and most important of all duties is to fear God, to be zealous for his glory, and to adhere firmly to his holy laws; on this depends the happiness of nations, and of every individual; as *David* represents to *Solomon* in these words: *The Lord searcheth the hearts, and understandeth all imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

C H A P. XXIX.

THIS chapter contains three things; I. A particular account of the offerings and contributions which *David* and the rulers of the people made for the temple. II. *David's* praise and thanksgiving to God, when he presented these offerings to the Lord. III. *Solomon* is made king, and *David* dies, after he had reigned forty years.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

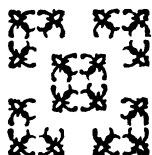
THE readiness and devotion with which *David*, and the chief of the people, offered so liberally towards the building of the temple, should excite

excite us to express our good will upon all occasions wherein God and his worship are concerned. And as *David* was the first who gave marks of his zeal on this occasion, and the chief of the people followed his example; so the rich and great should distinguish themselves, whenever they have it in their power to do any thing for God; and every one should esteem it their happiness, as well as their duty, to forward the design of those who desire to promote the interests of religion. But the piety of *David* shines forth with the greatest lustre in the prayer he made upon this occasion. Herein he acknowledges and adores the majesty of God; with great humility presents his offering before him, and the offerings of the chief of the people; offers up ardent prayers for all the people, and for *Solomon* his son; and exhorts the whole congregation of *Israel* to join with him in blessing and praising God. The humble and ardent devotion, and the extraordinary spirit which is diffused through every part of this excellent prayer, should wonderfully animate us to the same duties. Let us then discharge these duties with pleasure and a holy zeal: let us adore and praise the infinite power and majesty of God: let us with profound humility acknowledge, that we are in his sight but frail mortal creatures; that all we have comes from him; and that whatever we offer or do for his glory, we do but offer him his own, and what he had first given us. Let us beseech him to produce in us good dispositions, and ever keep them up in us, and to turn our hearts and thoughts towards him; let us excite our neighbours to join their praises with ours; and let us continually animate one another to bless and glorify his holy name, by our prayers and praises, and by our obedience, and a steady application to his service. Lastly, we here see that *Solomon* was made king in his father

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ther *David's* life-time; and by that means *David* had the comfort to see before his death the promises fulfilled, which God had made of giving him a son, whose reign should be glorious. Thus ended the life of *David*, whose history is so fully recorded by the sacred writers, in which we meet with so many remarkable events, and various examples, both of virtue and of vice, which we should improve to our instruction and sanctification.

The end of the first book of C H R O N I C L E S.



T H E

T H E
S E C O N D B O O K
O F
C H R O N I C L E S.

A R G U M E N T.

This book contains the history of the kings that reigned at Jerusalem, from Solomon, the son of David, to the time of the Babylonish captivity. In this book we find several histories which are recorded in the books of Kings, but with this difference, that this book, properly speaking, treats only of the reign of the kings of Judah; and when the kings of Israel are mentioned, it is only occasionally; whereas the books of Kings include the history both of the kings of Israel and Judah.*

C H A P. I.

I. **K**ING Solomon being settled on the throne goes to *Gibcon*, there to offer a solemn sacrifice. II. While he is there, God appears to him, and promises to give him whatever he should ask; and this prince, having begged of God wisdom rather than riches, he granted him both these blessings. III. At the end of the chapter, we have a brief description of the power and riches of *Solomon*.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

SOLOMON from the beginning of his reign gave proofs of his affection for religion, and of his zeal, in going to *Gibeon*, where the tabernacle then was, to worship God there, to give him thanks, and to implore his blessing. But his piety appeared chiefly, when God permitted him to ask what he pleased, and he requested of him that knowledge and wisdom, which was requisite to enable him to govern his people righteously: which request was so pleasing to God, that he not only granted him an extraordinary degree of wisdom, which made him superior to all other kings, but gave him withal the riches power and glory which he had not desired. This history teaches kings and princes, that in the exalted station they are in, there is nothing they stand more in need of than wisdom and righteousness; that the way to obtain this blessing, is to ask it of God; and that this will secure the divine favour to themselves and their subjects, and make them prosper. And let every one of us learn from hence to prefer true wisdom, and the guidance of God's holy Spirit, before earthly advantages. God, who heard the prayers of *Solomon*, never refuses real blessings to those who desire to receive them, and who ask them of him; and besides this, he often grants them temporal prosperity, which they do not ask.

C H A P. II.

I. **S**OLOMON sends ambassadors to *Hiram*, king of *Tyre*, and desires him to supply him with workmen and materials for the building of the temple, of *Jerusalem*. II. *Hiram* congratulates *Solomon* upon his accession to the throne, and grants his request.

REFLEC-

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE design which *Solomon* formed of building the temple, and his engagements with the king of *Tyre* on this account, lead us to consider, that nothing is more worthy of princes who have the happiness to know God, than to labour in the promoting true religion and the worship of God; and that this is the best use they can make of their power and riches. There are two reflections to be made upon *Hiram's* reply to *Solomon*: one is, that the king of *Tyre* had some knowledge of the true God, which appears from his blessing the Lord who made heaven and earth, that *Solomon* had succeeded his father *David*: the other is, that *Hiram* furnished *Solomon* with materials and workmen, as he desired. God usually blesses the undertakings of those who aim at the promoting his glory, and gives them good success.

C H A P. III and IV.

THE third chapter describes the temple which *Solomon* built, its dimensions, the most holy place, the cherubims, the hangings, and the pillars at the entrance of the temple; and the fourth chapter contains a description of the altar of burnt-offerings, the great vessel, called the molten or brazen sea, the lavers, the candlesticks, the tables, the courts, and the other works which were made for the temple, both by *Solomon* and by *Hiram*.

R E F L E C T I O N S on chapters iii and iv.

ON these two chapters let it be remarked, that king *Solomon*, when he built the temple, had it made, as to its principal parts, after the method of the ancient tabernacle, which was set up in the wilderness, in the time of *Moses*, and conformed to

the directions given by God. But he added to it many rich ornaments, and spared nothing which might render the temple the most magnificent building he possibly could make. Though what *Solomon* did upon this occasion was acceptable to God, because he did it out of zeal for his worship, we must remember that this magnificence was not what God chiefly required, even then, and much less what he principally requires of Christians: all that he has ordained, with respect to the externals of religion, is that we observe the rules he has laid down, and take care that *all things be done decently, and in order*: otherwise the gospel worship is internal and spiritual; and if Christians are not required to apply their riches to support any pompous ceremonies in religion, they ought to employ them in works truly good and holy, for this God has very expressly required of them.

C H A P. V.

SOLOMON begins the building of the temple, in the fourth year of his reign; and the building being completed in seven years, he orders the ark, and the sacred vessels, which were at *Jerusalem* in the tabernacle, to be brought into the temple; upon which occasion they offer sacrifices, and God gives tokens of his presence, a cloud filling the temple.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

AS the ark of the covenant was the most express and most precious pledge of God's presence among his people; it was expedient it should be placed in the temple which *Solomon* had built. For this reason he had it removed thither, with all the sacred vessels which had been till then in the tabernacle, which *David* his father had set up; and as he was desirous the ark should be removed in a religious
and

and solemn manner, it was attended with sacrifices, and they praised God with songs, and sacred instruments of music. What passed on this occasion is a proof of *Solomon's* zeal and piety; and an argument that nothing should more sensibly affect us, nor give us greater joy, that what tends to the glory of God, and procures us the divine protection, and the effects of his love. We find by this history, that what is done with a view to God's glory, is always acceptable in his sight; since after the ark was brought into the most holy place, God gave proofs of his presence by the cloud which filled the temple, and convinced the *Israelites*, that the Lord would for the future dwell there.

C H A P. VI.

KING *Solomon* dedicates the temple of *Jerusalem* by a prayer; in which, after he had first blessed God for having happily executed his design of building the temple, he beseeches him to hear those prayers, which should be offered up to him in that place; and to let that house be always attended with the tokens of his presence and favour.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE first thing we take notice of in this prayer, which *Solomon* made at the dedication of the temple, is his lively and grateful sense of God's favour, in fulfilling the promises made to his father *David*. Besides, from this prayer, which is full of noble and exalted sentiments of piety and religion, it appears, that *Solomon* knew that God is every where present, and that his glory filleth heaven and earth; and therefore he did not imagine that God was to be confined to that house which was then dedicated to him. We further learn here, that though *Solomon* had been at a vast expence in building the temple,

ple, and divine service was performed in it with great pomp, he never thought that this magnificence could be in itself acceptable to God, any more than a worship merely external. But he looked upon the temple as a place principally set apart for prayer, where the *Israelites* were to come and offer their supplications to the Lord in their several necessities; and particularly, in those miseries and calamities which God should visit them with, to punish them for their sins. This teaches us, that calling upon the name of the Lord, is the most important part of his worship, and that we ought to have recourse to prayer in all our afflictions, and in all our necessities. Lastly, What *Solomon* said on this solemn occasion teaches us, that God hears from heaven the prayers of those who apply to him in their necessities, provided they do it with a humble and sincere confession of their sins, and are truly disposed to amend their lives.

C H A P. VII.

I. **S**OLOMON having ended his prayer, God again gave tokens of his presence, by the fire which fell from heaven upon the sacrifices, and by the cloud which filled the temple. After the feast of dedication, they kept the feast of tabernacles. II. God appeared again to *Solomon*, promising to dwell in the temple, and to establish his kingdom, if he and his people were obedient unto him; and threatening on the contrary to destroy the *Israelites*, and the temple itself, if they forsook his worship.

R E F L E C T I O N S .

UPON the former part of this chapter, let it be observed, that though there is now no place where God dwells, as he formerly did in the temple of *Jerusalem*, or gives proofs of his presence in a sensible

sible and miraculous manner, as he did at the dedication of this temple, yet we ought to believe he is present wherever men call upon him in truth and sincerity; and that the prayers which are offered up in our religious assemblies, are very acceptable unto him; as our Lord assures us in these words, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* We find in the second part of this chapter, that God appeared to *Solomon* a second time; that he renewed his former promises of protecting both the city and temple of *Jerusalem*, and his family and subjects, if he and his people continued faithful; but that he threatened at the same time to reject them, and withdraw his protection from that place, which had been dedicated to him, if they fell into disobedience and idolatry. All this tended to confirm *Solomon* in the good thoughts he then entertained; for God fails not to make use of the most likely means to engage men to fear him. To this end, he employs promises and threatenings, and puts them both in execution; infallibly blessing those who keep his commandments, and forsaking those who rebel against him. This the *Jews* experienced, when God delivered them to their enemies, and the magnificent temple which *Solomon* had built, and dedicated in so devout and solemn a manner, was taken and burnt by the *Chaldeans*, about four hundred and twenty years after.

C H A P. VIII.

SOLOMON builds cities and forts, makes several nations tributary, gives posts and employments to the *Israelites* his subjects, brings his queen to the palace he had built for her, offers to God solemn sacrifices, observes the order which *David* his

father had appointed for the divine service, and fits out a fleet to go for gold to *Ophir*.

REFLECTIONS.

AFTER *Solomon* had dedicated the temple, he provided for the happiness and security of his subjects, and of his realm; he took care likewise to have divine service performed in a decent and regular manner, and as God had commanded. Kings who have the honour to know God, should thus labour to promote the happiness of their people, and above all, to make religion flourish. Princes who thus behave, God never fails to bless. *Solomon's* good designs he blessed with success; he strengthened and enlarged his dominions, by bringing neighbouring nations into subjection to him, and increasing his riches and revenues.

CHAP. IX.

IN this chapter we have, I. An account of the arrival of the queen of *Sheba*. II. A description of *Solomon's* riches. III. Mention of his death.

REFLECTIONS.

THE arrival of the queen of *Sheba*, who by the report of *Solomon's* splendor and wisdom was induced to take a journey to *Jerusalem*, shews that the reputation of that prince was exceeding great, and her coming served to make it still greater; which must convince *Solomon* of the truth of the promises God had made him. It is remarkable too, that this queen blessed God for setting *Solomon* upon the throne, and acknowledged that God, in mercy to his people *Israel*, had given them this prince: so that this arrival of the queen of *Sheba* might serve to give her and her people some knowledge of the true God.

But

But the principal reflection which Christians are to make on this history, is that mentioned by our Lord in the gospel, when speaking of those who had heard the preaching of the gospel, and seen his miracles, he says, *The queen of the south shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here.* Lastly, It appears from this chapter that God, according to his promises, granted *Solomon*, together with that extraordinary wisdom which was so much admired in him, riches likewise, and power, which distinguished him from all the neighbouring princes. This should have engaged him to express his gratitude all his life, for the privileges God had granted him; but after some time he abused them; his riches corrupted him and his subjects, and proved the occasion of exposing him and them to the judgments God had threatened them with. Peace and plenty are generally fatal to men, and their ingratitude towards God causes him to deprive them of these blessings, and severely punish them.

C H A P. X.

SOLOMON being dead, and *Rehoboam* his son succeeding him, ten tribes revolt from him, and make *Jeroboam* king.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS chapter informs us, that of the twelve tribes of *Israel*, which *Solomon* and *David* had reigned over, ten revolted from *Rehoboam* the son of *Solomon*, so that two only remained subject to the descendants of *David*, and the other ten made *Jeroboam* king over them, and formed a separate kingdom. This was a remarkable event, and from the account

we have of it in this chapter, we may conclude, that this revolution was owing to the evil advice of *Rehoboam's* young counsellors, who persuaded him to treat the people with rigour and severity, when they desired to be eased of part of their burden. By this we see, that violent and rash counsels, such as usually come from persons who want age and experience, are fatal to those who follow them, and may even expose states to great evils. But what is principally to be considered, was the punishment of *Salomon's* idolatry and other sins, which were continued under his son *Rehoboam*. The sacred history remarks, that all this was conducted by providence, *that the Lord might perform his word, which he spake by the hand of Abijah*, who had foretold that the ten tribes should be separated from the kingdom of *Israel*, and that *Jeroboam* should reign over them. This prediction was not long before it was fulfilled; God by this means punished the descendants of *David*, and all the people, for their sins; and their perseverance in these sins occasioned, in the end, the utter destruction both of the kingdom of *Judah* and *Israel*.

C H A P. XI.

I. **R**EHOBQAM intending to make war upon the ten tribes that had rebelled against him, is diverted from his design by a prophet of the Lord, forbidding him to put it in execution. II. He provides for the security of his kingdom, and builds several forts. III. The priests and Levites who were in the kingdom of the ten tribes, withdrew to *Rehoboam* at *Jerusalem*, with several other persons, because of the idolatry which *Jeroboam* had introduced. IV. *Rehoboam* takes several wives, and has a great number of children born to him.

REFLEC-

R E F L E C T I O N S.

GOD would not suffer *Rehoboam* to make war upon the revolted tribes, not only because it was his will that those tribes should remain separate from *Judab*, and make a distinct kingdom; but also, because the *Israelites* of the ten tribes were brethren to the men of *Judab*. From whence we may conclude, that when God thinks fit to correct us by certain events which he permits, it is our duty to acquiesce; that we ought to avoid making war upon those with whom we are united by the ties of nature, and especially by those of religion; which would be still more criminal in Christians, than it would have been in the *Jews*. What next deserves our attention, in this chapter, is *Jeroboam's* driving the priests and Levites out of his kingdom, because they would not submit to the idolatry which he had set up; wherein he gave a fresh proof of his impiety and ingratitude towards God, who had set him on the throne. The Lord's ministers gave at this time a noble example of zeal and resolution; since they chose rather to leave their houses and possessions, than to remain in a country where idolatry was publicly practised; and a great number of *Israelites* followed their example, and came to *Jerusalem* with them. We should always leave the place where we are not at liberty to serve God with purity, and should prefer the advantage of serving him before all the conveniences of life. But the ministers of religion, in particular, should be first in the discharge of this duty, and should upon all occasions express their zeal and inviolable attachment to the glory of God, and his worship. Besides this, the retreat of the priests, Levites, and many of the *Israelites*, who left their dwellings, served to confirm the kingdom in the hands of *Rehoboam*; and this should have engaged him

him to continue the exercise of the true religion in its purity; but this ungrateful prince at the end of three years forsook the Lord, and fell into idolatry. His impiety appeared likewise in his taking so great a number of wives, which God in the law had forbid the kings of his people to do; and which also drew upon him and his people the judgments of the almighty.

CHAP. XII.

I. **R**EBOBOAM and his subjects falling into idolatry and many other sins, God to punish them sent against them *Sisbak* king of *Egypt*, who took several cities of *Judah*. II. But *Reboam*, and the rulers of the people humbling themselves, upon the remonstrances of the prophet *Shemaiah*, God did not suffer *Sisbak* to destroy them, and that king retreated, after he had taken the treasures of the temple, and of the king's house. III. *Reboam* dies when he had reigned seventeen years, and *Abijah* his son succeeded him.

REFLECTIONS.

I. **T**HOUGH God had punished *Reboam* by the revolt of the ten tribes, this prince forsook God as soon as he found himself settled in his kingdom; he introduced idolatry and abominations of every kind, and thereby exposed himself to the wrath of God. When men improve neither by the corrections of the almighty, nor by his forbearance and long suffering, they bring upon themselves fresh misfortunes, as it happened to *Reboam* and his subjects, who were attacked by the king of *Egypt* and his allies. II. *Reboam*, and the chief men of his kingdom, being severely threatned, humbled themselves, upon the remonstrances of the prophet *Shemaiah*;

maiah; and on this account, and because, as is observed in this chapter, there were still some remains of piety and religion in the kingdom of *Judah*, God spared them, and suffered not the king of *Egypt* to destroy *Jerusalem*. It is but right, that those who have offended God should humble themselves; and that great men in particular, who usually provoke God's wrath, should be the first in endeavouring to appease it. The humiliation of sinners, and the piety of good men, avert the divine judgments, and deliver kingdoms. However, God, to punish *Rehoboam*, suffered *Shishak* to carry away the most precious things which king *Solomon* had put in the temple, and in his palace. This was a plain intimation to *Rehoboam* and his subjects, that if they continued to offend God he would forsake them, and at length deliver into the hands of idolators *Jerusalem* and the temple which *Solomon* had built. Further, we here see a great instance of the instability of human affairs. *Solomon* had left *Rehoboam* his son immense riches, and treasures full of gold and silver; and *Rehoboam* did not long possess them, but saw himself stripped of all, as he had been five years before of the greatest part of his dominions, by the revolt of the ten tribes. Lastly, It must be remarked, that though *Rehoboam* had humbled himself, yet he put not away idolatry, which continued likewise in the reign of his son *Abijah*. The repentance of sinners is not always of long continuance, and they often relapse into their former hardness of heart, as soon as God gives them a little rest.

C H A P. XIII.

THE history of *Abijah*, son of *Rehoboam*, and second king of *Judah*. He made war upon *Jeroboam* king of *Israel*; and when he had re-
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proached him and his subjects for rebelling against the house of *David*, and forsaking the worship of God, by the divine assistance he overcame him: but after he had reigned three years, the Lord smote him that he died.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is to be remarked on this chapter, I. That *Abijah* when at war with *Jeroboam* king of *Israel*, reproached him and the ten tribes for making idols, and forsaking the worship and law of God, and even himself expressed great confidence in his assistance. His reproaches were just and well grounded; yet *Abijah* himself was an impious prince, and though he boasted, as if he and his subjects had preserved the worship of God pure and uncorrupt, he was himself also an idolator. Thus wicked men discover a zeal for God and religion when it suits their interest, and condemn others while they themselves are highly guilty. Nevertheless, because *Abijah* was of the family of *David*, and there were in his kingdom many who feared God and trusted in him, this prince conquered *Jeroboam*. II. It must be observed, that God, who would not suffer *Rehoboam* some years before to make war upon *Jeroboam*, because he would have the kingdom of the ten tribes remain distinct from that of *Judah*, and because idolatry was not then established, hindered not *Abijah* from making war upon the same prince, and granted him a signal victory, a great number of the *Israelites* being defeated. God thought fit by this means to punish *Jeroboam*, to humble his subjects, and to convince them that the idolatry which reigned among them was odious in the sight of God; and that the true service of God and his covenant were to be found only in the kingdom of *Judah*. If God therefore gave *Abijah* great success, he did it for

for the glory of his name, and the benefit of his people. Thus does God sometimes suffer even the enterprises of the wicked to prosper, when they are good in themselves, or may tend to promote his glory.

C H A P. XIV.

I. **A** *BIZAH*, the second king of *Judah*, being dead, was succeeded by *Aza* his son, a king that feared God, put down idolatry and restored the worship of God. II. *Aza* governed with much wisdom and courage; and when the *Ethiopians*, with a numerous army, came to make war against him, he implored the divine assistance and defeated them.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HIS chapter sets before us the piety of king *Aza*, and the manner in which God rewarded him. *Aza* gave signal proofs of his piety in destroying throughout his kingdom the altars of the false gods and the idols, which had been introduced under the reign of *Solomon*, and continued under *Rebo-boam* and *Abijah* his predecessors. This excellent example should excite princes not to suffer iniquity to prevail in their dominions, and to cause religion and good manners to flourish and abound. II. God blessed *Aza*, strengthened him in his kingdom, and granted him rest and peace. It is true *Aza* was attacked by the *Ethiopians*, who came against him with a formidable army; but calling upon the Lord with profound humility and sure trust and confidence, he put the *Ethiophians* to flight. God thus blesses and protects religious princes, and in general, all those who are truly zealous for his glory, and fear before him; and if he suffers them

to be exposed to great dangers, he displays his power in their behalf, and delivers them.

CHAP. XV.

I. **T**HE prophet *Azariab* exhorts *Asa*, the third king of *Judah*, to complete the work which he had begun, and utterly destroy idolatry. II. This prince, moved by the remonstrances of the prophet, renews his covenant with God, and makes all the people swear to the covenant. III. He breaks in pieces an idol, which *Maachab* his mother had made and worshipped; and replaces in the temple those things which were consecrated to God. Wherefore the Lord continued to bless him, and made him enjoy a lasting peace.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter informs us, that *Asa*, encouraged by the signal victory he had lately gained over the *Ethiopians*, and animated by the exhortations of the prophet *Azariab*, applied himself again with great zeal to restore the service of God to its purity. He required all the people to renew their covenant with God by a solemn oath; which was done with great demonstrations of joy; in conformity to the law of God, he ordered all those who worshipped idols to be put to death: He even deprived his mother of all authority, because she was an idolator. All these marks of piety in *Asa* were so acceptable in the sight of God, that he granted him and his subjects great happiness and a lasting peace. The chief care of princes and their people, should be to render God propitious by a sincere affection for religion, and a firm attachment to his laws; for by that alone can they gain strength against their enemies, and secure their own happiness; as the prophet

phet *Azariah* represented to king *Asa* and his people; saying, *The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if you seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.* However, it must be observed, that when it is said in this chapter that the heart of *Asa* was perfect all his days, it is meant only, that he always adhered to the true service of God, and never fell into idolatry; for in other respects he fell into great sins towards the end of his life, as we see in the following chapter.

C H A P. XVI.

I. **A**S A, king of *Judah*, being attacked by *Baasha*, king of *Israel*, calls in the assistance of *Benbadad*, king of *Syria*. II. The prophet *Hanani* reproves him for it, and blames him for not trusting in God alone, who had assisted him in his war with the *Ethiopians*. III. *Asa*, provoked at these reproaches, put the prophet in prison, and at the same time oppressed some of the people. IV. Some time after he fell sick, and had recourse to physicians rather than to God: he died in the one and fortieth year of his reign, and *Jehoshaphat* his son reigned after him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are chiefly to take notice in this chapter, that *Asa*, who had a long time behaved with piety, forgot himself in the latter part of his reign. When he was attacked by *Baasha* king of *Israel*, instead of putting his trust in God, whose assistance he had experienced when the *Ethiopians* made war against him, he seeks for succour from *Benbadad*, king of *Syria*; he even solicits him, and prevails upon him by money to break his league with *Baasha* king of *Israel*; which was a breach of faith, and

an unjust action. He was very angry with the prophet *Hanani*, and put him in prison, for reproving him; he begun to oppress his subjects; and when he fell sick, he had recourse only to physicians, and turned not unto the Lord. Thus king *Asa* ended his days in a train of actions, which but badly suited with his former behaviour, and shew that his heart was turned away from God. This change in *Asa* shews that it is of no consequence to have begun well, and to have done our duty for some time, if we do not persevere; this is a warning to those who have piety, to be upon their guard, lest by growing remiss and careless, they deprive themselves of the divine protection, and the effects of God's love; since God grants and continues his favours only to those who serve him with an upright and sincere heart; as the prophet *Hanani* teaches us, in these beautiful expressions; *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.*

CH A P. XVII.

THE history of *Jehoshaphat*, the fourth king of *Judah*, begins here. He was a good prince; he destroyed idolatry, and dispersed Levites throughout the kingdom, to instruct the people in the law of God. The Lord blessed him for his piety, so that he became exceeding*powerful.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE life of the pious king *Jehoshaphat* deserves to be well considered. This prince was acceptable to God from the beginning of his reign. He imitated every thing that was laudable in the life of his father *Asa*; he even took away, in many parts of his kingdom, the high places, where idolatry

latry was still practised; and dispersed Levites throughout the land, to instruct his subjects in the law, and teach them the fear of God; for which reason God blessed him, and raised him to great power, which made him formidable to all his neighbours. Christian kings and magistrates are not less obliged to be zealous in promoting the glory of God; and above all, to take care to have their people instructed in religion by faithful and good pastors. This procures the divine protection upon those who govern, and upon the states which they are set over, and makes them prosper.

C H A P. XVIII.

I. **K**ING *Jehoshaphat* enters into an alliance with *Abab* king of *Israel*, marrying his son *Joram* to the daughter of *Abab*. II. He afterwards joined *Abab* in making war upon the *Syrians*; but desired first to know the will of the Lord, which was declared by the prophet *Micaiab*; who, contrary to the opinion of the four hundred false prophets, told them, that God would not bless the undertaking. III. *Abab*, provoked with *Micaiab*, put him in prison, and gave the king of *Syria* battle; but was killed in the engagement, and *Jehoshaphat* too narrowly escaped with his life.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **J**EHOSHAPHAT was guilty of a great crime, in suffering his son *Joram* to marry *Albaliab* the daughter of *Abab*, who was a wicked and idolatrous prince; and by going with him to war against the *Syrians*. The many evils which *Albaliab* did afterwards, and the ill success of the war, shew, that it is always a dangerous thing to associate with wicked men; and that, in particular, pious

kings ought not to be united with impious and idolatrous princes. II. However, *Jehoshaphat* shewed his piety, in making them consult a prophet of the Lord, before they went to fight against the *Syrians*; but he sinned again in not following the directions of the prophet *Micaiah*, and in going to this war. Before we undertake any thing, we should consult the Lord, and examine whether what we design to do is agreeable to his will; and when his will is known, we should follow it. Many hear the voice of God, and of his ministers, and know his will; but when it is contrary to their wishes, and what they are bent upon, they pay no regard to it. III. King *Abab* hated *Micaiah*, because that prophet told him disagreeable truths, and prophesied evil concerning him; he even put him in prison, and confided more in his own prophets, who promised him victory, than in what *Micaiah* declared to him. It is better to hearken to those who speak to us with sincerity, though what they say be ever so disagreeable, than to those who flatter us: but when men are offended with the truth, and will be deceived, God leaves them to their blindness; as it happened to *Abab*, whom God, on account of his obstinacy, suffered to be seduced by false prophets. We must not, however, imagine, that God inspired these prophets with a lying spirit, or was the cause of *Abab's* obstinacy and incredulity. Lastly, The event proved the truth of *Micaiah's* prediction. *Abab* was vanquished and slain; *Jehoshaphat*, who wanted courage to disengage himself from *Abab*, was very near losing his life; but God in his goodness spared him. Such is usually the end of those undertakings which are contrary to the divine will; and such is the fruit of contracting an intimacy with wicked men, and complying with them in prejudice of our duty.

C H A P. XIX.

I. **J**EHOSHAPHAT, returning from the war with the king of *Syria*, is reproved by a prophet for making an alliance with *Abab*, who was a wicked prince. II. *Jehoshaphat* after this applied himself to make piety and justice reign in his dominions. To this end he appointed judges in every city, and gave them instructions in their duty; and commanded them to submit to the priests and Levites in matters of religion.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IT is here to be observed, I. That God, in love to *Jehoshaphat*, reproved him by the prophet *Jebu*, for his fault in assisting *Abab* against the *Syrians*. This reproof shews, that we cannot, without displeasing God and exposing ourselves to his wrath, join with wicked men. II. Though *Jehoshaphat* had sinned in what he had done, the Lord pardoned his fault, because he had found in him many good things; and especially, because he had laboured to destroy idolatry throughout his kingdom. This proceeding of the almighty with this prince, proves, that he bears with the infirmities of those who have an upright heart, and forgives them upon their true repentance. III. *Jehoshaphat*, moved with the remonstrances of the prophet *Jebu*, exerted himself in many great acts of piety and zeal. He endeavoured to make religion and justice flourish throughout the kingdom; he took care to appoint judges; and very expressly charged them to do their duty, as the law of God had directed. Christian princes ought to be still more zealous for the service of God, and the exercise of justice; and judges should continually attend to what is delivered in this chap-

ter, conscientiously discharging the duties of their office, as in the presence of God, without respect to persons, and without taking any bribe. And as *Jehoshaphat* established good orders, not only in civil, but also in religious affairs, ordering the high priest to preside and judge in things relating more immediately to God; it is evident, that good order ought to prevail in religious, as well as civil affairs. God has appointed persons to whom he has committed the government of the church, as he has appointed others to govern the state. And as the functions of God's ministers, and those of magistrates, were separate and distinct among the *Jews*, they ought much less to be confounded among Christians, since the duties of pastors are all spiritual, and the Christian church is not confined to one particular state, as the *Jewish* church was, but is dispersed throughout the whole world.

. C H A P. XX.

I. **J**EHOSHAPHAT, being attacked by the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, proclaims a solemn fast, humbles himself before God, and makes his supplication unto him. II. God assures him by the prophet, that the *Moabites* should be destroyed; which was brought to pass in a miraculous manner. III. After this victory, *Jehoshaphat* makes his entry into *Jerusalem*, praising God. IV. He joined himself with *Abaziah* king of *Israel* to send a fleet to *Tarshish*, but their enterprise did not succeed.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this history we are to take notice, that when *Jehoshaphat* was attacked by the *Ammonites* and *Moabites*, he had recourse to God by a solemn fast, which

which he kept with all his subjects, and by that excellent prayer which is here set down, wherein he expressed so great humility, and so much confidence in God. The same confidence he discovered, when he addressed himself to his army, as they were going forth against their enemies; and said, *Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.* Nor was this his confidence in vain; for a prophet assured him, in the name of God, that he should obtain the victory in a miraculous manner and without fighting; which accordingly came to pass; their enemies making use of their weapons to destroy each other, while the priests were singing and praising the Lord: whence it evidently appeared, that the victory proceeded from God. As *Jehoshaphat* had called upon the Lord in the time of his distress, so he discharged the duty of gratitude, in a very edifying manner, rendering solemn thanks to God, when, in his return from the war, he entered *Jerusalem*. From the whole we draw the three following instructions; I. That prayer, fasting, and humiliation, are the most effectual means we can have recourse to in time of danger and necessity, whether public or private. II. That God delivers those who call upon him, and put their trust in him; that he is wonderful in counsel, and never wants means to save. III. That when God has heard our prayers, and granted our requests, we ought to render him our hearty and sincere thanks and praise for his mercies towards us. The last thing to be remarked in the life of *Jehoshaphat*, is his falling into the same fault he had before committed. He associated himself with *Abaziah*, king of *Israel*, of whom the scripture says, *He did very wickedly*; as he had before joined with *Abah*, the father of *Abaziah*. But he was punished for it, as

he had been before; the prophet *Eliezer* reproved him; the fleet, which they had put to sea, perished; and this enterprize, which the hope of gain had tempted him to, turned to his confusion and great loss. There is no good comes of associating ourselves with wicked men, and therefore we ought to avoid, as much as possible, having any communication with them.

C H A P. XXI.

JORAM, the fifth king of *Judab*, son of *Jehoshaphat*, slays his brethren, and becomes an idolator, as *Abab* had been; for which God punished him by the revolt of the *Edomites*, and of the men of *Libnab*. II. He receives a letter from the prophet *Elijah*, denouncing the judgments of God against his kingdom, his family, and his own person. III. A little after; the *Philistines* and the *Arabians* pillaged the land of *Judab*, and carried away his treasures, his wives, and his children; and after all these misfortunes, he fell into a tedious and incurable disease, and died in great tortures, leaving *Abaziah* his son to succeed him, who was the sixth king of *Judab*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE reflections which this chapter presents us with, regard the sins of king *Joram*, and the punishment which God inflicted on him. *Joram*, the son of the good king *Jehoshaphat*, was a very wicked prince. He begun his reign with the murder of his brethren; he followed the idolatry of the kings of *Israel*, and engaged the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and the whole kingdom of *Judab*, in the same impiety. This example teaches, that parents who fear God, may sometimes have wicked children, and that God, for the punishment of nations, does sometimes

sometimes set over them cruel princes without a sense of religion. And as it is observed, that *Joram* was drawn away to idolatry by *Atbaliab* his wife, who was the daughter of *Abab*; it appears from hence, that alliances made by marriage, or otherwise, with men who fear not God, are attended with fatal consequences; and that kings, especially, cannot contract alliance with wicked and idolatrous families, without exposing their kingdoms and their own families to the utmost miseries. This truth will appear still more evidently from the sequel of this history. Though these sins of *Joram* provoked the Lord to anger, yet he would not destroy the family of *David*: however, *Joram* did not go unpunished; the *Edomites*, and the men of *Libnab*, rebelled against him; he received a letter from the prophet *Elijah*, in which the judgments of God were denounced against him; the *Philistines* and the *Arabians* laid waste his country, took away his treasures, and carried his wives and children captives; and after he had suffered in his kingdom, in his treasures, and in his family, he was punished in his own person, being smitten with a strange distemper, which lasted two years, at the end of which, he died in horrid agonies, his bowels falling out; and after his death they would not bury him in the sepulchres of the kings. All this is an evident proof, that there is a particular curse attending cruel, unjust, and impious princes; that their end is seldom happy; that when they are dead, their memory is odious; and that, in general, wicked men are frequently in this life the objects of divine vengeance; which should lead us to adore the providence of God, and make us extremely afraid to offend him.

C H A P. XXII.

I. **A**HAZIAH, the son of *Joram*, reigned after him; he was the sixth king of *Judah*, and continued the idolatry which his father had introduced. When he had reigned one year, *Jehu*, who had just been anointed king of *Israel*, slew him and several of the chief men of *Judah*. II. When he was dead, *Ataliab* his mother, who was the daughter of *Abab*, and addicted to idolatry, took possession of the kingdom, and slew all the princes of the seed royal of *Judah*, even the children of her son *Abaziah*; there escaped but one, which was *Joash*, who was then but a year old, and was hid in the temple six years, and taken care of by his aunt, the wife of *Jeboiada* the high priest.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **A**T the beginning of this chapter we find that *Abaziah* succeeded *Joram* his father, because all his brethren that were elder than he had been slain by the hands of their enemies. This proof of God's wrath against the family of *Joram*, and his goodness to *Abaziah* in sparing him alive, should have engaged this prince not to provoke the Lord to anger by his crimes; and amazing it is, that *Abaziah*, after he had seen all the misfortunes that befel his father, and the tragical end he made, should run into the very same errors as he. But this is a common case in families where there is no fear of God; the children are like their parents; and especially, among princes, who too commonly give a loose to their passions, and are surrounded with flatterers and with evil examples. II. We must take notice, that *Abaziah* was ruined by following the counsels of his mother *Ataliab*, and by being allied to *Joram*,
king

king of *Israel*. The scripture says, that the destruction of *Ahaziab* proceeded from God, and was owing to his coming to *Joram*. *Abaziab* was slain by *Jehu*, and as he had partook in the sins of the house of *Ahab*, he was likewise involved in the judgments which God brought upon that family by means of *Jehu* king of *Israel*. Evil counsels, and the society of the wicked, are the occasion of many misfortunes. Wicked *Ataliab*'s getting possession of the throne, and causing the children of her son *Abaziab* to be put to death, may serve to shew, that God sometimes suffers tyrants and usurpers to exalt themselves, and take possession of states and kingdoms, and the enterprises of the wicked to prosper. But God sets bounds to their wickedness, and does not always forsake the oppressed. *Joash*, the son of *Abaziab*, was preserved by a very extraordinary act of providence; his aunt, the wife of *Jehoiada* the high priest, hid him, and took care of him six years; at the end of which time, *Joash* was proclaimed king, religion restored to its purity, and *Ataliab* punished for all the evils she had done. It is of consequence to observe likewise in this place, that as *Joash* was the only person left of the blood royal of *Judah*, God was pleased he should be preserved, not only because he had promised the posterity of *David* should sit upon the throne. but also because the Messiah was to be of his descendants; which could not have been had *Joash* been put to death, because the race of *David* would have been extinct.

C H A P. XXIII.

I. **J**OASH, son of *Abaziab* king of *Judah*, when he had been hid six years, during which time *Ataliab* reigned, his uncle *Jehoiada*, the chief priest, caused him to be proclaimed king, and
Ataliab

Atbaliab to be put to death. II. He renewed the covenant between God and the people; destroyed the worship of *Baal*, which *Atbaliab* had introduced in the kingdom of *Judab*; and restored the true worship of God.

REFLECTIONS.

THE providence of God, and his justice, in a very particular manner appear in raising the young prince *Joash* to the throne, and in the punishment of the wicked queen *Atbaliab*, who had usurped the kingdom, who encouraged idolatry, and had shed so much blood. This happy revolution, which at the same time freed the kingdom of *Judab* from the oppression of an impious and cruel queen, and, by restoring the kingdom to its lawful prince, recovered religion to its purity, shews, that God cannot grant a greater favour to any people, than by removing wicked princes, and placing good ones in their stead; and since *Joash* was set upon the throne by the zeal and prudence of *Jeboiada*, the high priest, who did an act of justice in restoring the crown to its rightful heir, we may learn, that it is a great happiness, when princes and states are conducted by the counsels of wise and godly men.

CHAP. XXIV.

THE history of *Joash*, the seventh king of *Judab*. He began to reign when he was seven years old, and adhered to his duty all the time *Jeboiada* the priest lived. But after his death, he became so corrupted that he again introduced idolatry, which, in the beginning of his reign, he had put away; and gave command to stone *Zeckariah*, the son of *Jeboiada*, in the temple, because that prophet reproached him for forsaking the Lord. God punish-
ed

ed *Joash*, by delivering him into the hand of the *Syrians*; and after he had reigned forty years, his own officers conspired against him and slew him, and *Amaziab* his son succeeded him.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THAT we may receive instruction from this history, we must consider, I. That king *Joash* feared God, and endeavoured to promote his service during the life of *Jeboiada* the priest; but that after his death, he corrupted his ways; and giving ear to evil counsels, both he, and the chief of the people, forsook the worship of the God of their fathers, to serve false gods. This great change in *Joash* shews, of how much importance it is, for great men to have about them wise and virtuous persons, and for the ministers of religion to be endued with zeal and prudence. The death of persons of this character, is a great loss; and evil counsels are very fatal to those who follow them. God, in his great goodness, seeing *Joash* thus erring from the right way, sent prophets to warn him of his sin and his danger; but he despised their warnings, and even stoned the prophet *Zechariah* in the temple, because he reproved him for his faults. This is an instance of extreme impiety in *Joash*, and of the basest ingratitude; since *Zechariah* was his cousin, the son of his father's sister, and of *Jeboiada* the priest, to whom *Joash* was beholden both for the crown and his life. Persons who once were pious and made a good beginning, may fall into the most enormous crimes when they grow remiss and careless, and do sometimes make a very bad end. Lastly, *Joash's* fate was like that of other bad kings; the scripture says, *God delivered him up to the Syrians, his enemies*, though they were few in number: he was killed in his bed by his own subjects, and buried with disgrace; from whence we may conclude,

conclude, that those who provoke the wrath of God by their sins, experience soon or late the severity of his judgments.

CH A P. XXV.

THIS chapter contains the history of *Abaziah*, the eighth king of *Judah*. In the beginning of his reign, he behaved with piety; and being at war with the *Edomites*, by the advice of a man of God he sent back all the *Israelites* he had taken into pay, and gained the victory over them. But afterwards he fell into idolatry, and served the idols of the *Edomites* whom he had vanquished; for which the prophet denounced his ruin. Some time after, he declared war against *Joash*, king of *Israel*, and was overcome: *Joash* entered *Jerusalem*, and plundered the temple. *Amaziah*, when he had reigned twenty nine years, was slain in a conspiracy, and *Uzziah*, his son, succeeded him.

REFLECTIONS.

I. **W**E must first take notice of what was good and commendable in *Amaziah*. The scripture speaks of him with commendation, because when he put to death those who had murdered his father *Joash*, he did not slay their children; wherein he behaved with justice and moderation, and conformed to the law of God, which forbids putting to death the children for their fathers sins. *Amaziah*, likewise, expressed his submission to the divine commands, when he dismissed the hundred thousand *Israelites*, which he had hired for a great sum of money; because a prophet ordered him so to do, and told him, that should he even lose all that money, God was able to make up the loss to him. *Amaziah* was rewarded for the regard he paid to the will of God, and gained
a great

a great victory over the *Edomites*. This shews, that no reasons of interest, or any other consideration, should hinder us from obeying the commands of God; and that he never wants means to reward those who do his will, and put their trust in him. II. But after this *Amaziah* ungratefully rebelled against God. Instead of acknowledging God the giver of this victory, he worshipped the idols of the nation he had vanquished; and when he was reprov'd for it by the prophet, he threatn'd to take away his life, if he did not hold his peace. Therefore God withdrew his protection from him; and the king of *Israel*, whom *Amaziah* had rashly and haughtily provoked, came and ravaged his country, entered *Jerusalem*, and plundered the temple, and the king's palace; which the kings of *Israel* had never done before. So that God, who did not think fit the *Israelites* should assist *Amaziah* against the *Edomites*, made use of those very *Israelites* to chastise *Amaziah* himself and his subjects. Lastly, That prince perished in a miserable manner, as his father had done, and was slain in a conspiracy which was formed against him. The lesson we from hence learn is this, that it will stand us in no stead to have done our duty for some time, if we do not persevere; and that those, who after they have begun well, cast off the fear of God, may become so very corrupt, as even to be totally abandoned, and bring upon themselves the most dreadful effects of the divine vengeance.

C H A P. XXVI.

THIS chapter contains the history of *Uzziab*, otherwise named *Azariah*, the ninth king of *Judah*. He adhered to the service of God in the beginning of his reign, and prospered; but growing afterwards corrupt, and even presuming to exercise the

the priest's office, the Lord smote him with leprosy, and he was forced to live apart till the day of his death. *Jotham* his son reigned in his stead.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE history of *Uzziah*, king of *Judah*, informs us, that he begun well, but made a very bad end. He at first behaved with piety, and applied himself to please God and to serve him, following the advice of a prophet named *Zechariah*; and whilst he acted thus he prospered. He was victorious, over the *Philistines*, defended himself against the *Arabians*, made the *Ammonites* tributary, fortified *Jerusalem*, and his reputation became exceeding great. But all this success lifted him up, and made him forget himself to such a degree, that he openly transgressed the laws of religion, attempting to offer incense in the temple, which none but the priests had a right to do. And while he was wroth, and obstinately opposed the priests, who would have prevented him, God smote him with leprosy; upon which, he was thrust out of the temple, and forced to live apart all the rest of his life. Here let us reflect, that good men grow corrupt when they suffer themselves to be off their guard; and that in prosperity, which is a dangerous state, men easily forget themselves. What befel *Uzziah*, for attempting to offer incense in the temple, proved, that God would not have kings make any innovations or alterations in religion, nor to intrude upon the office of those who are its ministers. From hence we may conclude, that every one should keep within the bounds of his calling, without interfering with other mens; and that as the governors of the church ought not to usurp the office and authority of princes and magistrates; so neither ought these to usurp the office of pastors, nor pretend to order religious affairs according to their own fancy.

C H A P. XXVII.

JOTHAM, the tenth king of *Judah*, succeeded his father *Uzziah*. He was a pious prince, and therefore the Lord made his reign to prosper. He died after a reign of sixteen years, and left the kingdom to his son *Abaz*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

JOTHAM is reckoned among the good kings of *Judah*. He walked in the steps of his father *Uzziah*, in what was right, but did not imitate his bad qualities; and by that means procured the favour of God, the effects of which he particularly experienced in his war with the *Ammonites*. Here let it be remarked, I. That all the kings of *Israel*, without exception, were idolators, whereas there were several good kings in the kingdom of *Judah*; though it was not in their power utterly to root out all superstitious and idolatrous practices. Now if among the kings of *Judah*, there were several found, who did great things towards making the fear of God flourish in their kingdom; the number ought to be much greater among the Christian princes. II. We learn from the history of *Jotham* and other good kings, that God blessed them, and made them prosper; whilst idolatrous kings were punished during their reign, in their families, and many other ways. This was a sensible proof to all *Israel* that God took care of them, and was a powerful motive to fear him. God has at all times given men convincing proofs of his providence and just government of the world, in order to engage them to serve him, and look upon him as the author of all their happiness.

CHAP. XXVIII.

I. **A**H A Z, the eleventh king of *Judah*, gives himself up to the most abominable idolatry. II. God punishes him by means of *Rezin* king of *Syria*, and *Pekab* king of *Israel*, who made war against him; his army was defeated by the *Israelites*, who carried away with them to *Samaria* a great number of prisoners, and a large booty. But the prophet *Oded* remonstrating with them, they sent all the prisoners, and all the booty back again into the land of *Judah*. III. *Abaz* calls in the assistance of the king of *Affyria*, against the kings of *Syria* and *Israel*; but this was of no service to him. However, he persisted in his sins, worshipped idols, and after he had given proofs of his incorrigible impiety and obstinacy throughout his whole reign, he died, having reigned sixteen years, and was succeeded by his son *Hezekiab*.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us here consider, I. The account of the many impieties of *Abaz*, who, though he was the son of good king *Jotham*, degenerated from his father's virtues, and introduced abominable practices, which had never before been seen in *Jerusalem*; he even made his children pass through the fire in honour of his idols, as the antient *Canaanites* did. Such a height of impiety, in a prince who had the knowledge of the true God, it is scarce possible to conceive; and therefore he was not long before he felt the effects of the divine vengeance: God delivering him first into the hand of the king of *Syria*, and then to the king of *Israel*, who defeated him, and killed an hundred and twenty thousand men, and carried away two hundred thousand prisoners, with very great spoils. This was a very remarkable

able example of the justice of God against this king and his kingdom. II. Observe, that though God, for the punishment of *Abaz*, had permitted the king of *Israel* to kill a great many, and take a vast number of his subjects prisoners; yet the prophet *Oded* censured the *Israelites* for the cruelties they had exercised against their brethren, the men of *Judah*; and commanded them to send back the prisoners, and the spoil they had taken; which the *Israelites* very readily submitted to, and sent the prisoners back again, with all tenderness; restoring the booty, and carrying upon beasts all that were not able to walk. This history proves very evidently, that God does not approve of the cruelties and outrages which are usual in time of war; and that we should treat all men, even our enemies, with gentleness and moderation. And if God was angry with the *Israelites*, for making so great havock among their brethren; much more must he be provoked against Christians, who, though they are all brethren, are too apt to be at war together, and to destroy one another. III. We see here how extremely wicked, and surprisingly obstinate *Abaz* was. Instead of humbling himself, and applying to God for help, when attacked by the kings of *Syria* and *Israel*, he had recourse to the king of *Affyria*, and carried his impiety to so great a height, as to ascribe the strength of the *Syrians* to their false gods; and said, *Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me.* Wherefore God, provoked with him, delivered him up to his enemies; the *Edomites* and *Philistines* gained several victories over him; and the king of *Affyria*, in whom he trusted, ravaged his dominions. But what is most of all shocking in the character of *Abaz*, is, as the scripture remarks, his trespassing yet more against the Lord, the greater his distress was. It is a sign

of an incurable and desperate degree of obstinacy, when the corrections of the almighty are useless, and when men, instead of improving, grow more wicked under affliction. The last thing to be considered is, that God, when he chastised *Abaz*, was pleased at the same time to make the king of *Assyria* his instrument to punish the *Israelites* and *Syrians*, who had unjustly made war upon *Judab*, as we learn from the eighth chapter of *Isaiab*. In such events as these, the ways of providence are very discernible, since God often makes wicked men his instruments, both to punish those who offend him, and protect those whom he designs to bless.

C H A P. XXIX.

HEZEKIAH, the twelfth king of *Judab*, was remarkable for his piety. He put down the idolatrous worship which his father *Abaz* had introduced; he restored divine worship to its purity; and to this end, he assembled together the priests and Levites, and addressed them in a grave and solemn exhortation. After this, he in a solemn manner renewed the covenant between God and all the people, and gave upon this occasion shining proofs of his zeal and religious joy.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

HEZEKIAH, a religious prince, though the son of a wicked and idolatrous father, was no sooner in possession of the throne, but being sensibly affected with the state he saw religion in at that time, and sincerely grieved to see so many proofs of God's wrath against the *Jews*, he thought how he might destroy idolatry, and restore the worship of God. He got together the priests and Levites, to purify the temple, to remove every thing out of it, which

which had been used to idolatrous purposes, and to cast it out; after which the service of God was restored. Then *Hezekiah* gathered all the rulers and the people together, and solemnly renewed the covenant with God. Princes and great men should employ themselves in nothing with more zeal and fervency, than in rooting out impiety, and supporting the cause of religion. To this purpose, the Lord's ministers should be encouraged, and magistrates should forward them in their great undertaking; and the people on their parts, in imitation of *Hezekiah's* subjects, should comply with the good designs of their rulers. Such a behaviour as this most certainly secures the heavenly favour and protection; as we learn from the blessings and many signal deliverances God vouchsafed to *Hezekiah*, in consideration of his piety and zeal.

C H A P. XXX.

I. **H**EZEKIAH proclaims the feast of the passover throughout the kingdom; he even invites to this feast the *Israhelites*, who dwelt in the country belonging to the ten tribes. II. This done, the people assembled themselves, threw down all the idolatrous altars in *Jerusalem*, and the passover was kept with great solemnity, and with great demonstrations of devotion and joy.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **A**S the passover was the principal token of God's covenant with the *Jews*, *Hezekiah*, who was willing to renew this covenant and restore the divine worship, desired to keep this feast, and liberally supplied, with the princes of the people, every thing that was necessary to that end. These were new proofs of *Hezekiah's* great zeal for the glory of God.

God. II. Another proof of *Hezekiah's* extraordinary zeal, is his inviting to this solemn act of devotion, the *Israelites* that still remained in the country of the ten tribes, though they were not his subjects; and to this end, writing to them in a very pious and affecting strain. True zeal endeavours to extend as far as possible, and when men are truly religious, they do all they can to engage other men to fear God, and to serve him, and to recover sinners from the error of their ways. *Hezekiah's* invitation did not produce on all the *Israelites* the same effect; some mocked, and others humbling themselves came to keep the passover at *Jerusalem*. Thus it commonly happens; well disposed minds receive with humility and joy the invitations of divine grace, whilst wicked men reject them, and even make them the subject of their scoff and raillery. By what is here said, we likewise learn, that among the *Israelites*, who remained in the kingdom of the ten tribes, after the *A Assyrians* had ravaged that country, there were still some good men remaining; but that the greatest part were impious and hardened wretches, who had made no good use of the divine correction. Lastly, There is this circumstance in the history before us, which deserves our attention. Those who came out of the country of the ten tribes to *Jerusalem*, though they were not able to do all that the law of *Moses* prescribed before the celebration of the passover, did nevertheless eat thereof. But *Hezekiah*, fearing God should be angry with them for it, beseeched him to pardon them, and to accept the devotions of all those who had sought him with an upright and honest heart, though they were not purified according to all the customs and ceremonies of the law. This proves, that *Hezekiah's* piety was well informed; he knew that no one should voluntarily and in contempt neglect the external duties of divine worship; but then

then he was persuaded at the same time that God regards the heart more than ceremonies; and when they cannot be observed, favourably receives the prayers and devotions of all those who seek him with sincerity. *Hezekiah* was not disappointed in his expectation; for we are told in this chapter, *that the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah*, and accepted the devotions of the people, the priests and the Levites; and that *their prayer came up to his holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven.*

C H A P. XXXI.

KING *Hezekiah* destroys idolatry in his own kingdom, and even in the country of the ten tribes; restores divine service to its due order, provides for the maintenance of the priests and Levites, and for the regular discharge of their several functions; commanding the tithes and first fruits to be paid according to the law; which the people obeyed with great cheerfulness.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS chapter affords us, in good king *Hezekiah*, an example of unwearied piety. As soon as the celebration of the passover was ended, he commanded the people to break down the images, and to remove every thing that tended to idolatry, not only in his own kingdom, but as far as he could in the country of the ten tribes; which they executed with great zeal; so that this prince was the restorer of true religion in *Israel*. True piety appears, not only in performing the external acts of religious worship; but chiefly in its fruits and effects, when men apply themselves sincerely to do what is pleasing in God's sight, and to put away every thing that may displease him. After this, *Hezekiah* set himself to restore th

divine worship, and to reinstate the priests and Levites in their proper functions; to this end he contributed part of his own revenues; and ordered the tenths, first-fruits and offerings, to be paid for the future according to the law; which his subjects readily and chearfully obeyed; bringing in great plenty from all parts what was required of them. No Christian can be excused contributing his part, according to his station and ability, towards making religion flourish and divine worship be performed, and the sacred ministry exercised in a suitable and convenient manner. This is a care well worth the attention of Christian princes; and by this they may acquire the greatest glory before God and man. The ready compliance of *Hezekiah's* subjects with the good intentions of their king, shews, that the zeal and good example of princes is of great weight, and that they have it in their power to do great things for God and religion. The last words of this chapter are remarkable; where it is said, that *Hezekiah did that which was good and right before the Lord his God; that in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.* What men do in the service of the house of God with a sincere intention, is always acceptable in his sight; nor does he ever fail to bless those who labour with an honest heart to promote his glory.

C H A P. XXXII.

I. **H**EZEKIAH, being attacked by *Sennacherib* king of *Assyria*, fortifies the city of *Jerusalem*, and exhorts the people to put their trust in God. II. *Sennacherib* sends officers from his army, to summon *Hezekiah* and his subjects to surrender, and

and to utter many blasphemous words against God. III. But God, moved by the prayers of *Hezekiab*, and by the intercession of the prophet *Isaiab*, destroys *Sennacherib*'s army, and he returning to his country is slain by his own sons. IV. About that time, *Hezekiab* was cured of a mortal disease; but in his prosperity forgot himself, and shewed all his treasures to the king of *Babylon*'s ambassadors. Lastly, After a reign of twenty nine years, he died, and after him reigned his son *Manassch*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **K**ING *Hezekiab*, as soon as he was informed *Sennacherib* designed to besiege *Jerusalem*, acted like a prudent prince, in fortifying the city, and stopping all the fountains which were without the city, that the *Affyrians* might find no water: And he gave at the same time proof of his piety and confidence in God, when he exhorted his subjects to fear nothing, but rely upon the Lord. Wise and godly men join the maxims of prudence with the rules of religion; they never neglect the lawful means which providence puts in their power to guard against the dangers that threaten them; but their confidence they place in God. II. The next thing to be attended to, is the impious and insolent manner in which the messengers of *Sennacherib* spake concerning the true God, comparing him to idols; and saying, that as the gods of the several nations which *Sennacherib* had conquered, were not able to deliver those nations; so neither would the God whom *Hezekiab* worshipped be able to deliver him. The insolent, blasphemous, and menacing speeches of this idolatrous king, which astonished *Hezekiab*, hastened his ruin, and provoked the Lord to destroy him, by sending an angel to cut off in one night his numerous army, and by suffering his sons to kill him, when he was returned into his

his own country. If God thus took vengeance of this idolatrous prince for his insults, much more severely will he take vengeance of those wicked Christians who openly defy him. III. This deliverance, which God vouchsafed to *Hezekiah*, procured him great regard from the neighbouring princes; and even induced them to bring from all parts offerings to God in the temple at *Jerusalem*. Thus God makes all things work together for the good of those that love him, and to the glory of his name. IV. God gave *Hezekiah*, at that time, a fresh proof of his kindness, in healing him of a mortal disease; but the sacred history informs us, that he was not truly thankful for the blessing, and that he sinned, in shewing his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of *Babylon*; which he did no doubt out of vanity, and with a design to procure respect from their master. In prosperity men easily forget themselves, and grow remiss, and thereby cause God to exercise them afresh with his chastening dispensations. V. It is said in this chapter, that the ambassadors of the king of *Babylon* had orders to enquire concerning the miracle that had happened, when the shadow of the sun went back ten degrees in the time of *Hezekiah's* sickness; which is a proof of the certainty of the miracle, and shews, that it had been taken notice of at *Babylon*. Lastly, *Hezekiah* died full of glory; and was honoured in a particular manner after his death; but his greatest glory was, the testimony the scripture bears of his piety and zeal; and this will make the memory of this prince for ever honourable in the church, and his example a pattern to those who are called by God to govern nations.

C H A P. XXXIII.

IN the history of *Manasseh*, the thirteenth king of *Judah*, we see, I. His sin in falling into idolatry and all manner of abominations. II. His punishment, when God suffered him to be carried captive to *Babylon*. III. His repentance, and pardon from God. IV. His restoration to the kingdom, and his zeal in repairing the evil he had done, and destroying idolatry. V. His death, and the reign of his son *Amon*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

TH E R E are four things remarkable in the history of king *Manasseh*: I. That, instead of imitating the piety of his father *Hezekiah*, he fell into the most detestable idolatry, shed innocent blood in great abundance, and exceeded in wickedness all the wicked kings of *Judah* that went before him; and though God sent prophets to warn him and his people, they continued to offend him more and more. II. That God, provoked at the sins of *Manasseh* and his people, threatened them by his prophets with the total destruction of the kingdom of *Judah*; and that *Manasseh* was put in chains, and carried to *Babylon*; wherein we see the completion of *Isaiab's* prophecy to *Hezekiah*, *Isai. xxxix. 7*. III. That this prince when in captivity humbled himself and besought the Lord; who, in consideration of his humiliation, brought him again to *Jerusalem*. IV. That *Manasseh*, after his restoration, shewed the sincerity of his repentance, by taking away the strange gods, and using his utmost endeavours to abolish idolatry, and restore religion to its purity. This history leads us to reflect, that the children of godly parents do not always inherit their piety; and that those, who like *Manasseh*,

seb, forsake God in their youth, and have an opportunity to gratify their passions, run into the greatest excess of wickedness; and that impious princes are the authors of public calamities, and expose themselves and their subjects to the wrath of God. The repentance of *Manasseh* should be well considered, as it represents on one hand, the necessity and advantage of afflictions; and on the other affords us an extraordinary instance of God's mercy to the greatest sinners, when they humble themselves and make a good use of his corrections. Let us likewise seriously attend to *Manasseh's* behaviour after his restoration; which was directly opposite to his former conduct; for during a long reign, he remedied the faults he had committed in his youth. True repentance consists in removing and remedying, as much as possible, the evil we have done, and in amending our lives. That we may the better enter into these reflections, we should add to the reading of this chapter, the prayer which *Manasseh* made while a captive in *Babylon*, which we find in the apocryphal books. As to *Amon*, the son of *Manasseh*, the fourteenth king of *Judab*, he, instead of improving by what had happened to his father, again introduced idolatry; but he being slain in a conspiracy, received the just reward of his deeds.

C H A P. XXXIV.

J O S I A H, the fifteenth king of *Judab*, whose history begins here, was an excellent prince. While he was yet very young, he undertook to destroy idolatry, and repaired the temple. In his time the book of the law was found, which he caused to be read; and having consulted *Huldab* the prophetess, she let him know that the threatenings contained in that book were going to be put in execution, and that the kingdom of *Judab* would soon be destroyed; but

but that God would take *Josiah* to himself before these misfortunes came upon them. When the king heard this, he renewed the covenant with God, and laboured with all his power to restore religion to its purity.

REFLECTIONS.

THOSE who are in authority over others, and in general all Christians have a most noble example of attachment to religion, and zeal for the glory of God, in the person of *Josiah*, when he took so much care to purge *Jerusalem* and the whole country from the idolatry which had been again introduced by his father *Amon*. Kings and princes, who profess Christianity, ought to be as attentive to the concerns of religion, and as zealous to banish vice, irreligion and profaneness out of their states, as the good kings of *Judah* were to root out idolatry. *Josiah* gave particular proof of his sincerity, when, upon hearing them read the book of the law, which had been found in the temple, he was terrified at the curses contained in it, and sent to consult *Huldah* the prophetess, what he must do to avert the miseries which the *Jews* were threatened with. Such is the effect which the word of God and his threatnings produce on those who fear him; when they hear his voice, they humble themselves; and when they see his wrath kindled, they seek means to appease it. The answer which *Huldah* sent the king is remarkable; she told him, that God would at length execute upon *Jerusalem* and its inhabitants the threatnings written in the law of *Moses*; because they had provoked him to wrath with their idolatry, and other abominations; but withal, she let the king know, that God would take him before this desolation came upon them. When men are arrived to a certain degree of wickedness, God must take vengeance; at such a time, good men can no longer avert his judgments;

ments ; but then God removes them out of the world, that they may not be involved in the evils which are to come. So that death is not always a proof of God's displeasure, for he sometimes shortens the days of those he loves most, as it happened to good king *Josiah* ; who, on account of his piety, was acceptable in the sight of God, and yet died in the flower of his age. We must consider, lastly, that though God had informed *Josiah* that the ruin of the kingdom of *Judab* was irreverfible, and that he himself fhould furely die, he abated nothing of his zeal. He gathered together the rulers and all the people, to renew the covenant with God ; he laboured with all his might to abolifh idolatry and lebauchery ; and employed the remainder of his life in acts of piety and religion. Whatever circumstances a good man may be in, and whatever the event of things may be, he always takes care to do his own duty, and dedicates with joy the life and ftrength which God has given him, to his glory and the public good.

C H A P. XXXV.

- I. **K**ING *Josiah* keeps the paffover with great folemnity, in the eighteenth year of his reign.
 II. Thirteen years after, going to fight againft the king of *Egypt*, he is wounded in the engagement, and dies at *Jerufalem* greatly lamented by all his fubjects.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we have frefh proofs of the great zeal which animated king *Josiah*. In his whole life, he neglected nothing which might tend to recover religion to a ftate of purity ; and appeafe the wrath of God which was ready to fall upon the *Jews*. He and all the people kept the paffover in fo folemn a man-

a manner, that the scripture observes, *there had never been any thing like it* in the reigns of any of his predecessors, from the days of *Samuel* the prophet. So that this good prince did all he could to please the Lord, and to inspire his subjects with the same religious sentiments. This should teach us never to be weary in well doing, but to improve more and more, and to persevere unto the end. This example should in a particular manner make an impression upon Christian princes and magistrates, and encourage them to be hearty and sincere in promoting true holiness and religion; and to render themselves acceptable in the sight of God and man, by the same methods which made *Josiah* one of the best and most excellent princes the world ever produced. But great as *Josiah's* piety was, kings and princes who profess to believe in *Jesus Christ* ought to surpass in this respect the best kings among the ancient people of God. This prince, however, it appears was guilty of a fault, in rashly engaging in a war against the king of *Egypt*, which proved the occasion of his being slain. After his death, all the people of *Judah* and *Jerusalem* lamented greatly, and the prophet *Jeremiah* made lamentation for him. It is a great, and often an irreparable loss to a nation, when God takes from them prudent and religious governors. This the *Jews* experienced after the death of *Josiah*, who was the last good king of *Judah*; whereas his successors were all wicked, and in a little time brought the kingdom of *Judah* to a fatal end, as we see in the following chapter.

C H A P. XXXVI.

THIS chapter contains the history of the four last kings of *Judah*. I. The first was *Jeboabaz*, son of *Josiah*, who reigned three months, and was then

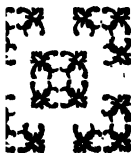
then deposed by the king of *Egypt*. II. The second was *Eliakim*, otherwise named *Jeboiakim*, who was likewise an idolator, and reigned eleven years. *Nebuchadnezzar* carried him away to *Babylon*, with part of the sacred vessels. He returned however to *Jerusalem*, where he was slain and cast out *without burial*, as we read in the book of *Jeremiah*. III. After him his son *Jeboiachin* reigned three months, and was likewise carried to *Babylon* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, who made *Zedekiah*, *Jeboiachin's* uncle, king in his stead; he was the nineteenth and last king of *Judah*. IV. Under the reign of *Zedekiah*, the *Jews* still persisting in their obstinacy and rebellion, *Jerusalem* was taken and burnt together with the temple, and the *Jews* went into captivity to *Babylon*, where they remained till the time of *Cyrus*, king of *Persia*, who set them at liberty and permitted them to return to *Jerusalem* and rebuild the temple.

REFLECTIONS.

WE find in the history of the four last kings of *Judah*, that notwithstanding the warnings God had given them, and though they saw his protection withdrawn from them, they provoked the Lord more and more by their idolatry; and the people followed their steps. The scripture takes particular notice, that before God destroyed the *Jews* he sent his servants to exhort them to repentance, because he had compassion on his people; but that this hardened people mocked them, and despised the word of the Lord; so that his wrath was kindled, and there was no remedy. Behold how God, who is just and gracious, repeats his warnings, in proportion as men more insolently provoke him! and behold too what is the effect of a continual and open contempt of God's word and loving-kindness! God delivered the *Jews* into the hand of the *Babylonians*, who took *Jerusalem* and

and burnt it, and shed a vast deal of blood, even in the temple, without pitying women or children, old or young. The temple itself was not spared, but was plundered and burnt by the *Chaldeans*; and the *Jews* who escaped that desolation were carried to *Babylon*, where they remained in captivity. Thus the threatnings which God had before, so many times denounced, were at last put in execution; and by this grand event we learn what those have reason to expect who abuse the grace of God, and his patience and long suffering, and obstinately persist in their sins.

The end of the second book of CHRONICLES.



T H E B O O K O F E Z R A.

A R G U M E N T.

In this book we are informed that Cyrus, king of Persia, permitted the Jews to return into Judea, and to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem, after they had been captives seventy years; that they were permitted to return under the conduct of Zorobabel, prince of the royal family of Judah, and grandson to king Jechoniah, and under the conduct of Jeshua the high priest. But the Jews met with great opposition from the neighbouring nations, till the time of king Darius, who gave leave again to the Jews to build their temple, and sent Ezra the priest into Judea. This Ezra was a man of great knowledge in the law of God, endued with extraordinary zeal and prudence, and made several regulations for restoring order, both in religious and civil government.

C H A P. I.

CYRUS publishes an edict, permitting the Jews to return into their own country and to build the temple; and causes the holy vessels to be restored to them, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from Jerusalem.

R E F L E C -

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. **T**HE first thing we are here to take notice of, is the completion of two remarkable prophecies. One is the prophecy of *Isaiab*, who foretold, two hundred years before, that a king named *Cyrus* should send the *Jews* back into their own country, and give commandment for rebuilding *Jerusalem* and the temple; the other, is the prediction of *Jeremiah*, who had exactly noted the duration of the *Babylonish* captivity, saying, that the *Jews* should return at the end of seventy years. II. This return of the *Jews* from their captivity, is a proof of the goodness of God towards his people; and shews, that if he suffers his church to be persecuted, he will not destroy it, but desires to purify it and to preserve it for ever. III. Let us next observe, that the restoration of the *Jews* was brought about by *Cyrus*, a heathen prince; that the king shewed great respect for the God whom the *Jews* adored; and ordered that all the holy vessels, which *Nebuchadnezzar* had taken out of the temple of *Jerusalem*, should be restored. God turns the hearts of kings as he pleases; and as he makes use of them to chastise his church, so he sometimes restores peace by their means; which should be a motive to us to fear him, and to depend upon his power and goodness. IV. If *Cyrus*, who was a heathen and an idolatrous prince, restored the sacred vessels to the *Jews*, Christian kings and princes should be very cautious how they withhold things dedicated to the service of God, or use them to any but religious purposes.

C H A P. II.

THE number of the *Jews*, of the priests and Levites, who returned from *Babylon* to *Judea*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **F**ROM the number of the *Jews* who returned from *Babylon* to *Judea*, in consequence of king *Cyrus's* edict, and who were no more than forty two thousand, we may conclude that this people, once so numerous, were very much diminished. However, it must be observed, that many still remained at *Babylon*, who returned afterwards, at several times, as we read in the seventh and eighth chapters of this book. II. It is evident from this chapter, that the *Jews* were at that time very exact in their genealogies; and those who pretended to be of the priestly order, and could not prove their descent, were excluded from the priesthood. III. We see that the *Jews*, notwithstanding the low estate they were then in, liberally contributed to the rebuilding the temple and restoring the service of God.

C H A P. III.

I. **T**HE *Jews* being returned from *Babylon* to *Jerusalem*, build an altar, upon which they offer sacrifices; they keep the feast of tabernacles and renew the ordinary service, till the temple was rebuilt. II. After this, they lay the foundation of the temple, to the great joy of some and the grief of others.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

AS soon as the *Jews* were returned from *Babylon*, they set about rebuilding the temple, in order again to perform divine service in it. This was the effect of their piety, and especially, of the zeal of their rulers, *Jeshua* the high priest and *Zorobabel*, prince of *Judab*. We ought all of us to have the same zeal, in labouring for the edification of the church;

church; these are the cares which should above all possess our minds; and our greatest joy should be, to see the kingdom of God established and confirmed. II. It is to be observed, that though the temple was rebuilt at that time, this second temple was not equal to that formerly built by *Solomon*, and destroyed by the *Babylonians*; which made the old men, who had seen the first temple, weep when they were beginning to build the second. By this the *Jews* might be convinced, that the worship of God did not consist in the riches and magnificence of the building, nor in pompous ceremonies; and this shewed too, that the time would come when God would wean the *Jews* from things of an external and visible nature, and would establish among men a spiritual worship, such as that of the gospel. Nevertheless, if the second temple was inferior to *Solomon's* in magnificence, it was to surpass it far in glory, by the advantage which the *Jews* would enjoy in seeing the Messiah whilst this latter temple remained.

C H A P. IV.

THE *Jews* refusing to let the *Samaritans* build the temple with them, the *Samaritans* wrote letters against them to the king of *Persia*, which made the work be several times interrupted, under the reign of *Cyrus*, *Abasuerus* his successor, otherwise named *Cambyses*, and under *Artaxerxes*, called likewise *Smerdis*; to whom the *Samaritans* wrote the letter contained in this chapter, which induced that king to forbid the *Jews* to go on with the building of the city and temple. Things continued in this state till the second year of king *Darius*, the son of *Hystaspes*, king of *Persia*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we see that the *Samaritans*, after they had endeavoured, but without success, to hinder the *Jews* by their artifices from building of the temple of *Jerusalem*, sent letters to the king of *Persia*, and by their calumnies put a stop to the building which they had begun. From whence we may observe, that God sometimes permits the most holy undertakings to be retarded; and that the church has always its enemies, which attack it sometimes by lies and artifice, and sometimes by open violence. Here we see, particularly, that the enemies of the *Jews* had recourse to calumny, to incense the kings of *Persia* against them, representing them as a set of rebels and seditious persons, and as enemies to kings. It has always been the lot of the church, and of the true worshippers of God, to be persecuted and slandered. But the sequel will shew us, that God does at length confound the crafty devices of the wicked; that he makes manifest the innocence of his children; and that after he has tried them, he makes those become their friends who had been their greatest enemies.

C H A P. V.

I. **T**HE prophets *Haggai* and *Zechariab* exhort the *Jews* to rebuild the temple. **II.** The governors of that country write to king *Darius*, the son of *Hystaspes*, to inform him of the design of the *Jews*, and to desire his orders concerning it.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we are to take notice, that while the building of the temple was interrupted, God sent *Zechariab* and *Haggai*, his prophets, to encourage

rage the *Jews*, and to engage them to renew their application to that pious design; and that the exhortations of these holy men had so much weight with them, that, notwithstanding the obstructions they met with from the governors of that country, the *Jews* continued the work, till the pleasure of king *Darius* was known. God never forsakes his church; he always raises up, when he judges it necessary, faithful ministers to labour in its edification; and we ought never to be disheartened when our enterprises are just, and conformable to the will of God; for his providence will give them a happy issue, though it seem contrary to all appearance. Thus it happened at this time; the letters which the officers of king *Darius* wrote against the *Jews*, occasioned his searching for the edict which *Cyrus* had published in their behalf, about seventeen years before, and to give orders to prevent their being molested for the future. So that what their enemies designed for their destruction, proved the means of putting the *Jews* in a condition of going on with their enterprise.

C H A P. VI.

I. **K**ING *Darius* having found the edict which *Cyrus* had granted in favour of the *Jews*, orders his officers not to interrupt them in building the temple, and even to furnish them with things necessary for that purpose, and for the sacrifices they were to offer in *Jerusalem*. II. In four years the temple was finished and dedicated; divine service again performed in it; and the passover celebrated with great joy and solemnity.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE are to observe here the justice of king *Darius* towards the *Jews*; and the concern he shewed,

shewed, in hastening the rebuilding of the temple of *Jerusalem*, even by furnishing a part of the necessary expences, both for that and for the performance of divine service, out of his own revenues. Above all, this prince expressed his respect for the *Jewish* religion, and for the God they worshipped; requiring that the *Jews* should offer up prayers and sacrifices to God for him and his family; and even threatening to punish severely all those who should oppose their design. Such sentiments as these, and such behaviour in an idolatrous prince, shew very plainly what is the duty of the princes and great men of the world, with regard to the divine service; and this king will one day condemn Christian princes and magistrates, who professing to know God and to serve him, do not reverence religion and the deity as they ought; do not contribute to the utmost of their power to the service of God, as he requires; and do not confess, that their happiness depends upon his favour and the prayers which the church offers up to God for them. In consequence of this decree, the *Jews* had the comfort to finish the building of the temple; to dedicate it, and to celebrate the passover with joy, praising God for having turned the heart of the king in their favour. In this change in the state of the *Jews*, we cannot sufficiently admire the providence of God, and the care he takes of his people: we see that God watches over the church, and finds means to support it, even by idolatrous princes, and in places where it has been most persecuted.

C H A P. VII.

I. **E**ZRA goes into *Judea*, by order of king *Artaxerxes*, surnamed *Longimanus*, to make an end of settling religion and divine service, and to appoint judges and magistrates. This king makes a decree,

decree, permitting the *Jews*, who were still in his dominions, to return to *Jerusalem*; he commits into *Ezra's* hand the gold and silver, which he and the chief men of his court had offered for the temple and the sacrifices; and he orders his treasurers to assist them out of his revenues, on the same account. II. *Ezra* returns thanks to God for having inclined the king to be favourable to them. From the first return of the *Jews*, under the conduct of *Zorobabel*, in the time of *Cyrus*, to this journey of *Ezra*, were about seventy years.

REFLECTIONS.

THE observations we are to make here, are, I. That, after the temple was rebuilt, God sent to *Judea* the priest *Ezra*, a man well versed in the law, full of zeal and divinely inspired; that he might regulate every thing relating to religion in a proper manner. The church will be for ever beholden to this holy man; for by his care the divine worship, the law, and the sacred writings were restored; and therefore his memory ought to be precious in the Christian church, as it always was in the *Jewish*. From whence we may take notice, how necessary it is for the edification of the church, that there should be in it understanding and faithful ministers, to instruct the people, and teach them to serve God as they ought. II. We see here that *Artaxerxes*, who was an idolatrous king, very liberally furnished a part of what was necessary for maintaining divine service; and that he gave *Ezra* a power to establish magistrates for the government of the *Jews*. These are marks of a great respect for religion, and acts of justice and equity, which ought to be imitated by all, and especially by the great. III. *Ezra's* thanksgiving to God, for putting it into the heart of the king and his counsellors to favour the *Jews*, shews that this worthy minister
of

of religion, was full of piety and zeal. Thus pious men give God all the glory of the good that befalls them, and put their whole trust in him in prosperity and adversity.

C H A P. VIII.

I. **T**H E number of the *Jews*, who returned into *Judea* with *Ezra* in the seventeenth year of the reign of *Artaxerxes Longimanus*. II. *Ezra*, before he set out on his journey with the *Jews*, kept a fast to implore the divine protection. III. He gives to the priests the gold and silver, which the king and his counsellors had offered for the temple. IV. He sets out with the *Jews* that accompanied him, and arrives safe at *Jerusalem*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **I**T appears from the number of *Jews* that went from *Babylon* with *Ezra*, who were about eighteen hundred, that all the *Jews* did not return to *Jerusalem* with *Zorobabel* in the reign of *Cyrus*; and that many remained in the country where they were carried captives. II. It is to be remarked, that when *Ezra* was going to set out for *Judea*, he desired no soldiers of the king to escort him in his journey, though he could with ease have obtained it. The reason he gives himself for not doing it, was, for fear they should think he distrusted the divine assistance; but he implored the blessing of the almighty by fasting and prayer. This behaviour might convince the idolatrous people among whom he lived that he had a perfect confidence in the divine protection. Good men trust in God rather than in man; their principal security they seek in prayer; and God on his part hears their prayers and blesses them, as he did *Ezra*, who had a prosperous journey, and those

those that were with him. Lastly, It is to be remarked, that king *Artaxerxes* and the most distinguished of his lords, sent by the hands of *Ezra* rich presents and considerable offerings to *Jerusalem*. This affords us a fresh proof of the particular care providence took of the *Jews*; and is an example, which should animate the rich and great to be in a particular manner liberal, whenever they have an opportunity to do any thing for God and religion.

C H A P. IX.

E *ZRA* being informed, when he came to *Jerusalem*, that several *Jews*, even of the priests and rulers themselves, had married idolatrous women, which was contrary to the law of God; he was extremely troubled at it, humbled himself before God, and offered up an excellent prayer, in which he confesses the sins of the *Jews*, acknowledges the justice of God's judgments upon them, and promises in their name, that they should no longer disobey the commandments, and break the covenant of the Lord, as they had done.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I T appears from this chapter, I. That after the return from the captivity, very great irregularities had crept in among the *Jews*; and in particular, that many of them, even of their rulers, had married wives that were strangers and idolators; and therefore it was expedient God should raise up zealous persons, such as *Ezra* the priest, to reform these abuses. It is a great misfortune when men openly transgress the laws of God; and especially, when those who fill the highest stations authorise this licentiousness by their own example. II. As soon as *Ezra* was informed that the *Jews* had contracted these unlawful marriages, he was extremely concerned

ed at it, and endeavoured to remedy it. He gave public tokens of his affliction, by praying and humbling himself before God. Those who have true piety and zeal, afflict and humble themselves, not only for the evils that befall them, and for their own faults, but also for the sins of other men. The prayer which *Ezra* made upon this occasion is very instructive. He therein acknowledges with profound humility, that the sins of the *Jews* had obliged the Lord to chastise them, and had reduced them to the servile condition they were in at that time. This shews us, that in the evils we suffer we should always give glory to God, and acknowledge the righteousness of his judgments. But as *Ezra*, after he had confessed the sins of the *Jews*, promised they should no more break the law of God; we must acknowledge, that the means to obtain the return of God's grace and remission of our past sins, is not to fall into them again, but to forsake them by a speedy and sincere conversion.

C H A P. X.

EZRA, after he had humbled himself before God, gathers together all the *Jews*; represents to those that had married strange women the great sin they had been guilty of; and by the advice of the chief men and the whole assembly he engages them to put away those women; which was punctually performed, beginning with the priests who had contracted such kind of marriages.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

ON this chapter we are to consider, that *Ezra*, after he had fasted and confessed the sins of the *Jews*, set himself to reform the abuses, and to prevent the disorders that had been introduced among them.

them. It is not sufficient to pray and make confession of our sins, and to be somewhat grieved for them; the chief effect of prayer and confession, should be to put a stop to them, and utterly forsake them. This shews also, that the duty of magistrates and ministers of God, is to make use of their exhortations and authority for restraining licentiousness, and reforming all abuses; and that should the disorders be general and great, and the guilty persons of a distinguished character and station, they ought not to be tolerated, nor should the reformers be discouraged. We are especially to take notice, that the *Jews* obeyed *Ezra* and the priests, by putting away the strange wives they had married contrary to the command of God; which must needs be grievous to them, and the more so because several had children by those wives; which was therefore a great proof of their submission, and of the sincerity of their repentance. Thus sinners who are truly affected with their faults, and desire to obtain forgiveness of them, make no scruple to do all that God commands, though it be never so harsh and difficult, and even to renounce all that is most dear to them. Finally, We may see by this chapter, that marriages and alliances with idolators are displeasing to God, and ought not to be permitted among those who profess the true religion.

The end of the book of E Z R A.

T H E
B O O K
O F
N E H E M I A H.

A R G U M E N T.

The book of Nehemiah is a continuation of the history of the state of the Jews, after their return from the Babylonish captivity. Nehemiah made two journeys into Judea, by the permission of Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia. The first was in the twentieth year of that prince's reign, thirteen years after Ezra's journey; and the second about twelve years after. He went there in quality of governor of the Jews, to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, and to establish good order therein. In all his conduct he shewed great zeal for God, and at the same time much prudence, resolution and confidence in the divine being. Magistrates should read and meditate on this book with great attention, and improve by the noble examples of piety and wisdom contained in it.

C H A P. I.

NEHEMIAH being informed of the sad condition Jerusalem was in, is sensibly affected with it, and prays the Lord to have compassion on that city.

R E F L E C -

R E F L E C T I O N S *after reading the chapter.*

FROM the very beginning of the book of *Nehemiah*, we meet with marks of the ardent piety of this holy man. This appears in his grief, to hear of the deplorable state the city of *Jerusalem* and all the *Jews* were in; and in that excellent and fervent prayer which he made, to implore the mercy of God on their behalf, to obtain pardon for their sins, and their complete restoration. All those who fear God, and especially those who are in an exalted station, should, like *Nehemiah*, be more concerned for the church of God than for any other thing; should sympathize in the evils that befall it, pray continually for it, and labour as much as possible to promote its happiness and prosperity.

C H A P. II.

I. **N** E H E M I A H, who was cup-bearer to king *Artaxerxes*, obtains leave of him to take a journey to *Jerusalem*, and procures the necessary letters on that occasion. II. Being arrived there, and having visited the city, he exhorts the magistrates and the people to rebuild the gates and the walls; which they set themselves about, notwithstanding the opposition of their enemies.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

HERE it must be observed, I. That though *Nehemiah* enjoyed a considerable post at the court of *Artaxerxes*, and was greatly in favour with that prince; yet he was sincerely grieved when he was informed what condition *Jerusalem* was then in, and desired leave of the king to go into *Judea*. This is an excellent example of the great piety and zeal of *Nehemiah*. Good men are more concerned
for

for the glory of God than their own interest; and whilst they see that glory obstructed, and the church under affliction, they cannot relish any pleasure, though they should enjoy the greatest worldly advantages. This shews likewise, that those who have credit with great men, or that are in authority, cannot employ it better, than in procuring the good of the church and of religion: II. In the next place we must observe, that *Nebemias*, before he made his request to the king, begged of God to touch the heart of that prince; he obtained his petition, and acknowledged that God had disposed the king in his favour. This wise governor was no sooner arrived at *Jerusalem*, but he gave proof of his great prudence and intire confidence in God, and laboured successfully in rebuilding the walls of the city, in spite of the obstructions of their enemies. *Nebemias*'s whole behaviour proves his sincere piety, joined with great prudence and courage; and makes him a pattern for magistrates to follow. *Nebemias*'s success teaches us, that God blesses the designs that are formed for good ends; and that those who labour to promote his glory, should never be discouraged when they are opposed by the wicked.

C H A P. III.

IN this chapter we see how and in what order the walls of *Jerusalem* were rebuilt.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IT appears from this chapter, that the *Jews* who dwelt at *Jerusalem*, animated by the exhortations of their governor, *Nebemias*, laboured with great zeal and earnestness in raising the walls of the city, every one who was able to be employed in it taking his part of the work. By this means *Jerusalem*,

lem, whose walls had been long overthrown; put on a new face, and was in some degree in a condition to defend itself against the enemy. This success should be ascribed to the piety and prudent management of *Nebemiab*, whose endeavours God blessed; and to the good will which the people and rulers discovered on this occasion.

C H A P. IV.

THE *Jews* neighbours laugh at their undertaking to rebuild the walls of *Jerusalem*; but observing how the work went forwards, they were resolved to attack them; whereupon *Nebemiab* implores the assistance of God, and puts himself in a state of defence; exhorting the *Jews* to continue their work, and to fear nothing.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we have three principal reflections to make. The first is, That as the enemies of the *Jews* derided their undertaking, and did all they could to obstruct it; so those who labour for the glory of God, have reason to expect the contradiction of the wicked. II. That in all our dangers we should have recourse to the Lord, without neglecting our own labours and application, or any lawful means to ward off the evils which threaten us. Thus *Nebemiab*, when he found himself attacked, called upon the Lord, exhorted the people to fear nothing, and shewed by all he said, that he put his whole confidence in God; but, at the same time, he gave necessary orders to prevent being surpris'd by their enemies, and used all the precautions which prudence required. III. We here find, that God blesses the undertakings of those that trust in him, and assists them against their enemies. This *Nebemiab* found by experience, since

God frustrated all the opposition of the neighbouring people, and the *Jews* happily finished the work they had begun.

C H A P. V.

I. **N**EHEMIAH being informed that several of the *Jews* oppressed their brethren by usury, assembles the magistrates; represents to those that were guilty, the greatness of their sin, and obliges them to restore what they had unjustly taken. II. And, to set a good example, he gives up part of the profits of his office, as governor; and contributes out of his own substance both towards building the walls of the city, and towards the support of the necessitous.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE history contained in this chapter, affords several excellent reflections. I. The first is, That it is a very great sin to use extortion, and particularly to enrich ourselves and oppress the necessitous, by selling, or lending to them, upon hard terms, in the time of dearth and scarcity. II. That those who have been guilty of this sin, should restore what they have thus unjustly gotten, or even when they have exacted payment with too great rigour and severity: whence it is evident, that restitution is an indispensable duty, and that men are in conscience, and before God, obliged to make restitution of many things, which by human laws they might legally possess. III. It appears from hence, that magistrates are obliged to prevent usury and injustice, and to restrain, as *Nebemiah* did, those who oppress the people, and force them to restore what they have got by wicked means. IV. The conduct of *Nebemiah* deserves our most serious attention. During the twelve years

years that he was governor of *Jerusalem*, he would not to insist upon the rights of his office, nor suffer his servants, and those that were under him, to oppress any, but gave up his own dues, that he might not bring a burden upon the people in that troublesome time; he gave even part of his own substance to supply the necessities of the public, and relieve private persons: all which he did, as he himself observed, because he feared God. This was a noble example of equity, piety, and disinterestedness, worthy to be imitated, especially by magistrates, and by the rich and great; and this shews, how averse we ought to be from oppression and injustice, since, in case of necessity, we ought to give of our own, and even to dispense with our right. The faithful discharge of these duties fills the mind with great confidence towards God, and enables a man to say, as *Nehemiah* said, with so much faith and piety, *O my God! think upon me for good.*

C H A P. VI.

NEHEMIAH relates in this chapter, that notwithstanding the obstructions he met with from the enemies of the *Jews*, by means of false prophets, and even of those of his own nation, he had always resisted them, and had completed the building of the walls of *Jerusalem*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN the account *Nehemiah* gives of what happened to him, during his government, we may take notice, that good people, and especially those that labour for the glory of God, are exposed to many troubles, not only from their declared enemies, who attack them with open force, or by craft and calumny; but also from those whom they look upon as their

brethren; and that even sometimes, unworthy ministers of the Lord stir up these troubles against them. It appears likewise, from the wise, steady, and pious behaviour of *Nehemiah*, that those who labour for the public good, should never be staggered by the threats and slanders of the wicked; and that, with the help of the Lord, who watches over them, they happily overcome all opposition.

C H A P. VII.

NEHEMIAH takes care for the security of *Jerusalem*; numbers the *Jews* that were returned from the captivity, among whom some made considerable offerings, for the supply of the public necessities, and for the service of God. This list is the same with that recorded in the second chapter of *Ezra*, except in some few respects.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

BESIDES the reflections which have been made upon the second chapter of *Ezra*, relating to the lists here set down, there are two things to be considered in this chapter: I. That to great piety, *Nehemiah* joined that prudence which was requisite to secure *Jerusalem*, and the *Jews*, at a time when they were exposed to the insults of their neighbours; which shews, that the care of maintaining good order, and preserving public tranquillity, is worthy of the wisest and most pious magistrates. II. We have likewise a beautiful example of piety and liberality, in the voluntary contribution of *Nehemiah*, of some of the chief men, and of several private persons, towards the temple and the divine worship; and this example is the more instructive, as the *Jews* were then in a state of poverty, and there were, at that time, but few rich men among them.

C H A P. VIII.

ALL the *Jews* are gathered together to hear the reading and explanation of the law; upon which occasion, many tears are shed. *Nebemiah* and *Ezra* comfort them, and proclaim the feast of tabernacles, which was celebrated with a general joy.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **W**E are informed in this chapter, that *Ezra* assembled all the people, men, women, and all that were capable of understanding, to hear the reading and explanation of the law; from whence we learn, how necessary it is to impart to the people the knowledge of the holy scripture, and for that purpose, to read, and explain it publickly to all, without exception, as the Levites did upon this occasion. II. The tears which the *Jews* shed, and their being so sensibly affected at the hearing of the law, shew the effect which the word of God produces upon well disposed persons. III. It is said, that *Ezra* and *Nebemiah*, when they saw the people grieved and afflicted, comforted them, and exhorted them to rejoice in the Lord, who was their strength. When the heart is humbled and affected with a godly sorrow, then the word of God fails not to make a lively impression; then it is, we are in a condition to relish spiritual joy and consolation, and to present ourselves before God with confidence, as the *Jews* did, when they celebrated the feast of tabernacles. The orders that *Nebemiah* and *Ezra* gave concerning that feast, shew likewise, with how much exactness those pious governors of the people of God, observed all that was prescribed by his law, and how zealously we ought all of us to be affected in the service of the Lord, if we would serve him ourselves, and induce

others to serve him, in a manner agreeable to his will.

C H A P. IX.

THE *Jews* keep a fast, hear the reading of the law, and offer up a prayer to God, in which they adore his majesty, acknowledge his goodness to their forefathers, the wonders he had done for them, the sins they had many times committed, his patience and long suffering in bearing with them, and giving them warning, and the justice of his corrections. They likewise bless God for restoring them to their own country, though in a sad and melancholy condition; and promise to keep his covenant faithfully for the future.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE prayer contained in this chapter, which the *Jews* made to God, with solemn fasting, is one of the finest in all the scriptures. What is chiefly to be observed in this prayer, is as follows. The *Jews* adore the power and majesty of the most high God; solemnly acknowledge the mercies their nation had received from him, in *Egypt*, in the wilderness, and in the land of *Canaan*, and his forbearance and long-suffering towards them; they confess their sins and rebellions, and their abuse of his favours; they own too, that God had justly chastised them, by sending them into captivity, and subjecting them to strange princes. Lastly, They enter into a solemn engagement, never more to return to their old sins, but to keep inviolably the covenant which they then renewed with the Lord. We should make a useful application to ourselves of all the parts of this excellent prayer; read it often, and learn from thence to praise and adore God, to acknowledge the favours he bestows upon us all in general,

neral, and on every one in particular; those, especially, whose circumstances somewhat resemble those of the *Jews*, at that time, and who have been made to pass through divers trials and afflictions, ought from hence to learn to confess their sins and ingratitude, to celebrate his forbearance, to be more faithful to him for the time to come, and religiously to perform the conditions of his covenant.

C H A P. X.

THE *Jews* made a covenant with the Lord, and all of them engage by a writing, signed by the chief of them, and by a solemn oath, religiously to observe the covenant, and particularly, to do and provide every thing necessary for the service of God.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE *Jews* gave very extraordinary proofs of their repentance and zeal, when after a public fast, they renewed, in an authentic manner, their covenant with God, and all of them, small and great, engaged for the time to come to keep his commandments, and adhere inviolably to his service. Such should be the effect of religious acts: fasting, and solemn devotions, should produce reformation of life, obedience to God's commands, and an unwearied application to his service. The manner of the *Jews* renewing their covenant at this time, should put us in mind of that covenant which all of us have made in baptism, and confirmed upon so many occasions, and particularly at the Lord's supper, by the most sacred and inviolable promises. Let us remember, that this covenant obliges us to walk in the laws of our God, and to keep all his commandments; as we must all of us steadily do, if we would not be guilty

of perjury and infidelity; and as *Nebemiah* the governor of *Jerusalem*, and all the chief men were the first to sign and swear to the covenant, and all the people joined with them: so magistrates, and the ministers of religion, ought to signalize their zeal in every thing that concerns the glory of God, that they may the better animate the people to the discharge of their duty. After the renewal of the covenant, the *Jews* took care to restore the orders and regulations made in the law of God, with respect to the sanctification of the sabbath, to the offerings, first fruits, tithes, and other matters relating to the service that God had established under the law. We ought not to be less zealous for the gospel worship, and for every thing which may be, to ourselves or others, a means of rendering to the Lord, not only the external service he requires, but chiefly the internal worship, which consists in loving him, and fearing him, and in sanctifying ourselves more and more, through the whole course of our lives.

C H A P. XII.

ALl of those who dwelt at *Jerusalem*, and in the country about it, in the time of *Nebemiah*. The rulers of the people dwelt in the city; and the people being divided into ten parts, the lot was cast, and one part in ten settled in *Jerusalem*, and the other nine parts were dispersed in the cities of *Judah*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT is related in this chapter, leads us to consider, that herein was fulfilled what the prophets had foretold, before the destruction of *Jerusalem*, saying, *That the city of Judah should be again inhabited.* This came to pass under the prudent and pious governor *Nebemiah*: and herein the
Jews

Jews might see the truth of God's promises, and a proof of his great love towards them.

C H A P. XII.

THE first part of this chapter contains the names of the priests and Levites at that time. In the second we are told in what manner *Nehemiah* dedicated the walls of *Jerusalem*, and appointed persons to receive the first fruits, tenths, and other oblations of the people, which were set apart for the maintenance of the priests and Levites.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THE dedication of the walls of *Jerusalem*, was an instance of the piety of *Nehemiah*, and of the rest of the *Jews*. By this ceremony, by the sacrifices they offered, and by the hymns of praise which they sung upon the occasion, they meant to ascribe to God's mercy the restoration of their city and nation, and to secure his protection for the future. Zealous persons take occasion from every thing to express their piety and gratitude, to render homage to the Lord for all the temporal advantages they enjoy; and wise and pious magistrates look upon his protection as the fountain of all the happiness, and of all the security, both of cities and states. Christians ought to imitate the zeal of *Nehemiah*, and his people; and, like them, promote the good of religion, provide for the support of the divine service, and the advancement of God's glory, every one according to his power and abilities.

C H A P. XIII.

I. **N**EHEMIAH, when he had been twelve years in *Judea*, returns to *Persia*, and then takes

takes a second journey from *Persia* to *Jerusalem*, where he reforms several disorders, which had been introduced in his absence by *Eliashib* the priest's means.

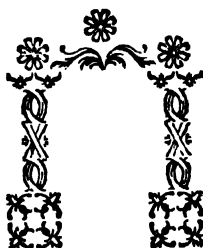
II. He separates the strangers from the *Jews*. III. He provides for the subsistence of the Levites, who, by reason of their poverty, had forsaken their office. He makes orders for preventing the profanation of the sabbath, and marriages of the *Jews* with strange women.

R E F L E C T I O N S .

THIS is a chapter, which ought to be particularly considered by those who have the government of the church committed to them, and by Christian magistrates. We here see with what zeal *Nehemiah* set himself to reform the abuses that had crept in, while he was gone into *Persia*, and to procure the observation of what God had commanded in the law, for the support of the Levites. Nothing is more worthy the care of persons in a public character, than what concerns religion. We may likewise from hence conclude, that it is a duty to provide for the maintenance of those that perform divine service, and to take care that things devoted to pious uses should be faithfully administered. What is particularly remarkable, is the zeal and resolution which *Nehemiah* shewed against those who kept not the sabbath, and on that day, brought to *Jerusalem* burdens, and several wares, as well as against those who had married strange women. The governors of the church and magistrates, ought to employ their authority to hinder the profanation of the Lord's day, and to oppose with vigour every thing that is contrary to the law of God and good order. To animate and encourage them to the discharge of these duties, they would do well seriously to attend to these words, which this prudent and religious governor of *Jerusalem* several

veral times repeats in this book, and which are so full of piety and trust in God: *Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds, that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof. Remember me, O my God! and spare me, according to the greatness of thy mercy.* Upright pastors and magistrates, and in general all who have a true zeal for the house of God, and who labour heartily and with a sincere affection, in the edification of the church, may use the same words, and be assured, that God will remember them for their good, and that he will be the rewarder of their piety.

The end of the book of NEHEMIAH.



T H E
B O O K
O F
E S T H E R.

A R G U M E N T.

In this book we see how God made use of queen Esther, who was a Jewess, and wife of king Ahasuerus, to bring about the deliverance of the Jews who were in that king's dominions, and to do them good. It is thought what is related in this book happened some time after the Jews were returned from the Babylonish captivity; and that this Ahasuerus, who is called Artaxerxes in the additions to the book of Esther, was Darius the son of Hystaspes; this prince, as well as others in that time, having different names in holy writ and in profane history.

C H A P. I.

KING *Ahasuerus* makes a great feast for the chief nobles in his kingdom; and divorces his queen *Vashti*, because when she was sent for to the feast she refused to come.

R E F L E C T

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. **T**HE description in this chapter of the grand entertainment which king *Abasuerus* gave to the nobles of his empire, and the princes of the provinces, shews the riches and splendor of that monarch; by which we may judge of the glory to which *Esther* was exalted by becoming his queen. However, one may observe, in the description of this feast, the prudence and temperance of *Abasuerus* and his court; since no one was required to drink more than he himself chose. The sentiments of this heathen prince, condemn the shameful excess which the Christians run into upon such like occasions. II. In the haughty and insolent carriage of queen *Vashti*, and the disgrace which she fell into, we see what misfortunes men bring upon themselves by their pride; and that the proud are brought low by providence, while the humble are exalted. III. We must above all consider, that God was pleased so to order it, that *Vashti* should be divorced to raise *Esther* in her stead; who was to be an instrument in God's hand to bring about the deliverance of the *Jews*. The last reflection to be made on this chapter is this: if *Abasuerus* and his counsellors judged the behaviour of *Vashti* the queen to be blame-worthy, and of dangerous consequence, and that women ought to honour their husbands; this duty is in the most express manner required of Christian women by the law of God; and in particular where St *Paul* says, that *wives should submit themselves unto their own husbands, as unto the Lord; and that they should not usurp authority over them.*

C H A P. II.

I. **K**ING *Abasuerus*, after he had divorced *Vashti* the queen, made choice of *Esther*, a virgin that was a *Jewess*, to be queen in her stead. II. Two of the officers of *Abasuerus* conspire against him; and *Mordecai*, a near relation of *Esther*, discovers the plot.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS chapter contains two remarkable events: the first is, the choice which king *Abasuerus* made of *Esther*, above all other women, to declare her queen in the room of *Vashti*. Providence so ordered things, that *Esther*, who was a *Jewess*, might avert the misfortunes which were going to fall heavy upon the *Jews*. So that in this event we see the care God took, not only of *Esther*, who was hereby greatly exalted, but particularly of the *Jews*, who were at that time in great numbers dispersed throughout the empire of *Abasuerus*. God has in all ages raised up persons to deliver his church from the dangers which threatned it. The other event, which likewise proved afterwards a means of the *Jews* deliverance, is the discovery which *Mordecai*, who was a *Jew*, and a near relation of queen *Esther*, and had even been as a father to her, made of the conspiracy, which two officers of *Abasuerus* had formed against him. It is true, this important service was at first forgot, and went unrewarded, but was noted in the public records. It clearly appeared some time after, that the hand of the Lord was in all this; since the information *Mordecai* had given of this conspiracy proved the occasion of his preferment, of *Haman's* ruin; who was the *Jews* enemy, and of the deliverance of that people. Providence disposes things
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a long time beforehand for the execution of its designs. We have likewise in the behaviour of *Mordecai*, a remarkable example of the fidelity that subjects owe to their princes.

C H A P. III.

HAMAN, who was a favourite of king *Abasuerus*, being provoked because *Mordecai* did not prostrate himself before him, formed a scheme to destroy him and all the *Jews*, and obtained of the king the necessary orders for that purpose.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**HE exaltation of *Haman* shews, that God permits sometimes wicked men to arrive to the highest degree of honour and power, and that they abuse their authority to murder the innocent; but that he soon brings them low, and exposes them to shame and misery. II. *Haman* conceived a mortal hatred against *Mordecai*, and all the *Jews*, because *Mordecai* would not fall down before him; which *Mordecai* refused to do, not out of pride, but because his religion would not permit him to pay *Haman* the honours he required. Nothing provokes ambitious men more than not submitting to them; and their resentment usually produces hatred, and hurries them to the most cruel acts of vengeance. This is a warning to every body, and especially to great men, to behave themselves humbly in their exalted stations. III. We find that *Haman* did not shew his resentment towards *Mordecai* alone, but resolved to destroy all the *Jews*; and to bring about his designs, he prejudiced *Abasuerus* against them by his calumnies, representing them as a seditious people, and enemies to princes. This method the enemies of the church have ever taken to make it odious to kings; this method succeeded

succeeded with *Haman* : he prevailed upon *Abasuerus* to publish a decree, ordering all the *Jews* to be put to death ; the day for their utter extirpation was appointed, so that all that people were in the utmost distress. But we learn, by the sequel of this history, that God suffered things to proceed to this extremity only the more effectually to confound *Haman*, and convince the *Jews* in a more surprising manner of his care and protection. However, *Abasuerus* gave credit too easily to *Haman's* suggestions against the *Jews*, and by his credulity had like to have occasioned many millions of innocent persons to perish. This shews how dangerous it is to listen to detractors, and that we ought never to credit evil reports, till we have first enquired into the truth of them.

C H A P. IV.

I. **M**ORDECAI, being informed of the decree, that was given out to destroy all the *Jews*, is extremely afflicted at it, and causes notice thereof to be given to queen *Esther*, that she might endeavour to prevail upon the king to revoke the decree. II. *Esther* was at first afraid to speak to the king ; but upon *Mordecai's* representation of the case, she promised to do what she could in behalf of the *Jews*, and sent them word to fast and pray for three days, to obtain of God success in the design which she had formed.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. **T**H E condition to which *Mordecai* and the *Jews* were reduced, after the decree was published to destroy them all, shews, that the faithful are sometimes given up into the hands of their enemies, in such a manner, that their destruction seems unavoidable.

unavoidable; but God does then find out means to deliver them, which they little expected. II. It is observable, that *Esther*, when informed by *Mordecai* of the danger that threatned the Jews, was at first afraid to speak to the king about it; but when *Mordecai* let her know, that if she wanted courage to exert herself in behalf of her nation, God would punish her, and deliver his people by some other means; she then resolved, at the hazard of the king's displeasure, to intercede for the Jews. We should never refuse to defend the cause of the innocent, and especially to do what we can to advance the interest of the church; since every one ought to contribute towards it, in some cases, even at the hazard of his life: and those who have it in their power to promote it, and have not courage to do it, for fear of some misfortune, have reason to apprehend the divine judgments. Lastly, As *Esther*, before she would present herself to the king, commanded all the Jews to fast and pray with her, we must always have recourse to the Lord in dangerous and important enterprizes, and join prayer with such other means as are proper to be used for our deliverance, that God may bless us.

C H A P. V.

ESTHER the queen, after they had fasted and prayed for three days, presents herself before *Ahasuerus* her husband; meets with a favourable reception, and begs him to come with *Haman* to two feasts, which she had prepared. In the meantime, *Haman*, enraged with *Mordecai*, prepares a gallows to hang him on.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

LET us here observe, I. The courage and resolution of *Esther*, who, when she had prepared herself by fasting and prayer, presented herself before *Abasuerus*, intending to intercede for the Jews, though it was death to come into the king's presence, without being sent for. When our duty to God and the church is concerned, we ought to have no regard for ourselves, but do what we are called to with our utmost strength, whatever the success of it be. II. *Abasuerus* kindly received the queen, though she was at first afraid to appear before him. This was the effect of her fasting and prayer, joined with that of the other Jews. By prayer and humiliation we obtain success of God, especially when his glory is concerned; and he turns the hearts of men, and even of kings, in favour of those who fear him and put their trust in him. III. *Esther* did not immediately ask of the king what she intended to request of him, but desired him to come, two days together, to a feast, with *Haman*. She behaved thus, out of prudence, that she might with more ease prevail upon the king, and in his presence confound *Haman*. Lastly, We see that *Haman*, though in the height of all his glory, could taste no solid satisfaction, because *Mordecai* would not prostrate himself before him; and to cure his uneasiness, he prepares a gallows to hang him upon. Those who are in the most exalted station, are not always so happy as men imagine; they have generally some secret trouble which gnaws and devours them; and indeed a little matter will sour all their prosperity: this is especially the lot of proud and ambitious men; their pride is their punishment, when they have the mortification to see themselves not honoured as they expect, which makes them give
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way to malice and revenge. But when the wicked seem to be most firmly rooted, and oppress good men without control their ruin is then near at hand, and they themselves hurry it on by their crimes.

C H A P. VI.

KING *Abasuerus*, not being able to sleep, called for the publick records, where they read to him the passage which mentioned the conspiracy of two of his officers, that *Mordecai* had discovered. The king, to reward the services *Mordecai* had done him, caused him to be led round the city in very great state by *Haman* himself, the enemy of the Jews, and the chief person in the kingdom, who that very day was come to desire *Mordecai* to be put to death. *Haman*, after he had attended *Mordecai*, returned home full of grief.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WE cannot sufficiently admire the ways of providence in the history recorded in this chapter. At the time the Jews were going to be destroyed, and the very day *Mordecai* was to die, God so ordered, that *Abasuerus* could not sleep, and caused the publick records to be read to him, and that place in particular where the important service which *Mordecai* had done him, in giving information of a plot formed against his life by two of his officers. By this means, that which *Mordecai* had done, and was forgot, as it generally happens with great men, was rewarded at a time when it produced much greater good to him and all the nation of the Jews, than if he had been immediately rewarded. God, in his unsearchable wisdom, sometimes suffers things to proceed to that extremity, that he seems to have for-

faken those that fear him ; but, at a convenient season, he comes in to their assistance, and when it is needful disposes all events in their favour. We have here another surprising instance of the interposition of providence, when we see *Haman* coming, that very day, to *Abasuerus*, to procure an order to hang *Mordecai*, which would have been infallibly granted ; and so blinded with pride, that he imagined he was speaking for himself, when *Abasuerus* asked him, what honours should be conferred on the man whom the king was pleased to distinguish in an extraordinary manner : without knowing it, he invented triumphs for *Mordecai*, who was his aversion, and whose death he was then come to procure, and was forced to attend him thro' the city ; and so had the sorrow and shame to become, when he least thought of it, and contrary to his own intention, the instrument of the exaltation and of the glory of that person whose destruction he had resolved : and *Mordecai* received the greatest honours, the very day a gibbet was to have been his portion. This unforeseen and surprising event, with the effects it produced, both with regard to *Haman* and the Jews, most undeniably prove, that God, in his infinite wisdom and by his power was the disposer of it, to deliver *Mordecai* and the Jews, and to the confusion of their cruel oppressors.

C H A P. VII.

A *HASUERUS*, going with *Haman* to a second banquet, which *Esther* the queen had invited him to, she intreats him to revoke the decree he had made, by *Haman's* instigation, to destroy the Jews. The king, enraged with *Haman*, commands him to be hanged on the gallows which he had prepared for *Mordecai*.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

IN this chapter we see the sudden fall of *Haman*. Though he was a favourite of the king, he was accused by *Esther*, who convinced the king of the injustice and cruelty of this enemy of the Jews. *Haman*, knowing himself guilty, could say nothing in his own defence; and the king was so enraged with him, that he was not only disgraced, but even condemned to death, and hanged upon the gallows which he had set up for *Mordecai*. These are new proofs of the justice of God's providence; and evidently shew the vanity of human greatness, and how God confounds and punishes the proud, slanderous, cruel and bloody man; and takes particular care of his church, and in general of all the innocent. Lastly, This example shews very plainly that God, who is just, generally punishes the wicked, making the evil they had prepared for others fall upon their own heads.

C H A P. VIII.

A*HASUERUS* gives *Mordecai* the estate and employments of *Haman*, revoking the decree which he had given against the Jews, and dispatches letters at the intreaty of *Esther*, throughout his kingdom, giving them leave to defend themselves against their enemies; which occasioned great joy among the Jews.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

WHAT we are to observe upon this chapter is, that not only *Haman* was punished, and the Jews delivered from the intended massacre; but that *Mordecai* took his place, and was exalted to the same honours as this enemy of God before enjoyed, and

and that the Jews were even authorized to defend themselves against all that should attempt to hurt them. The queen desired of the king, that the Jews might have liberty to secure themselves, by taking arms. This precaution was necessary, because she foresaw, that after the orders given by *Haman*, the Jews would be attacked in several quarters, which accordingly came to pass. By this means, the alarm the Jews were in was dispersed and turned into joy; and this wonderful deliverance tended likewise to the glory of God, since it is remarked, that upon this, several embraced the Jewish religion. We here see the truth of what is said in scripture, that God *raises the poor out of the dust, and sets them with princes*. Let us make this further observation, that if the Lord permits the just to be afflicted, and sometimes seems to deliver them into the hand of the wicked, he restores them peace and prosperity. These are powerful motives to induce us to trust in God, and to live always in innocence, and then we shall always share in his protection.

C H A P. IX.

THE Jews, in consequence of the leave granted them by *Abasuerus*, gather together to defend themselves against their enemies, and slay a great number of them, upon the very same day which had been marked out by *Haman* for their destruction. After this is over, they keep a solemn feast, and *Esther* and *Mordecai* appoint that day to be kept for the future in memory of that deliverance. This feast was called the feast of Purim.

C H A P. X.

THE king exalts *Mordecai* to the greatest honours, and *Mordecai* makes use of his credit to procure the good of his nation.

R E F L E C T I O N S on chap. ix, and x.

ON the two last chapters we may make the three following reflections. I. That the Jews, in slaying their enemies, acted very justly; not only because they were engaged in the just and necessary defence of themselves, but likewise because the king had given them leave and authority, to stand upon their guard against those that should endeavour to take away their lives, notwithstanding the revoking of the edict which *Haman* had procured against the Jews. Among those who were slain by the Jews, were the sons of *Haman*, who were even hanged after their death; which was a token of the curse of God upon that cruel and bloody man. II. The second reflection relates to the truth and certainty of the history contained in the book of *Esther*. The certainty of it appears, from what is said in the tenth chapter, that these things were recorded in the chronicles of the kings of the *Medes* and *Persians*; but chiefly by the appointment of the feast of Purim, which was ordered by *Esther* and *Mordecai*, and has been observed ever since, and is even kept at this day by the Jews. Lastly, That which is said at the end of the book, that *Mordecai* was the second after king *Ahasuerus*; and that he procured the good of his nation, and fought the prosperity of his people, is a lesson to great men, and those that are in credit and authority, that if God has raised them,

them, the best use they can make of their authority is, to employ it to support the innocent, protect the church, advance the interests of religion, and promote the glory of God.

Here ends the book of *Esther*, and the historical books of the Old Testament.

The End of the FIRST VOLUME



